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HALF A MILLION OF MONEY.

A Nobel.

BY

AMELIA B. EDWARDS,

AUTHOR OF "BARBARA'S HISTORY," ETC., ETC.

"O Bella età dell' oro!"—GUARINI.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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HALF A MILLION OF MONEY.

CHAPTER I.

SAXON RENEWS HIS ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE COLONNAS.

SAXON found the Earl waiting for him at the Sedgebrook station, with a plain phaeton and a long-limbed, bony, black mare, that looked somewhat viciously askance at the new-comer, and would evidently not have consented to stand still for a moment, were it not for the groom at her head.

"That's right, Trefalden," said Castletowers, as Saxon emerged from the station with his rug over his shoulder. "Your train's a quarter after time, and the mare has been giving herself as many airs as a spoiled

beauty. Jump up, my dear fellow, and let me tell you how glad I am to see you. Brought any horses?"

"Yes, two—since you insisted that I should do so. Here they come."

The Earl turned and glanced at the thoroughbreds, which were now being led down in a travelling costume that left nothing of them visible save their hoofs and their eyes.

"They're as welcome as yourself—if that's not a bad compliment," said he. "I've sent a light cart for your luggage, and my man shall follow with your groom, to show him the way. It's only a couple of miles to the park gates. Anything else?"

There was nothing else; so the groom stepped back, and the mare shook her ears, and went away down the road as if she had been shot from a catapult.

"I am delighted you've brought those horses, Trefalden," said the Earl, as they flew along between the green hedgerows of the pleasant country road; "for I have really nothing fit to mount you upon. This mare's a demon when

her temper is up, and my mother's carriage horses are as fat and lazy as a pair of aldermen. In fact, I have given over the only tolerable beast in my stables for Miss Colonna's sole use and benefit, as long as she remains at Castletowers."

"Miss Colonna?" echoed Saxon.

"A lady who is visiting us," replied the Earl, explanatorily. "You have heard of her father, no doubt—Giulio Colonna, the great Italian patriot? He is staying with us also."

"Yes, I have heard of him," said Saxon, who had turned very red, and begun to wish himself back again in London.

"He is my mother's oldest friend," continued Castletowers, "and mine too. I don't know what you may have heard of him—few public characters have ever had so many enemies, or so many friends—but you must be prepared to like him, Trefalden, for my sake. You may not take to him at first. He is eccentric, absent, somewhat cold; but a man of antique virtue—a man whose grand simplicity of soul is as much out of place in the nineteenth century as Cincinnatus

himself would be out of place in a modern drawing-room."

Saxon thought of the twenty francs that Signor Colonna had offered him at Reichenau, and did not kindle at this description, as his friend had anticipated.

"I have heard nothing to his disadvantage," he said, with some constraint. "Is Major Vaughan still with you?"

"Yes, and Burgoyne comes down to-morrow. We intend to be quite gay while you are all here."

"What do you mean by quite gay?"

"Well, my mother gives a dinner party to-morrow, and an evening party on Saturday; and on Thursday the last meet of the season will be held in our grounds. Then on Monday, the officers of the Forty-second, now quartered at Guildford, give a great ball, to which our guests are, of course, invited—and so runs the programme, with little variation. It is monotonous; but what can one do at a distance of thirty miles from London?"

"Lead the happiest life in the world, I should think," replied Saxon.

“It is a question of taste and means,” said the Earl, with a sigh. “A *motif* of field sports, set to an everlasting *ritornella* of dining and dancing, dancing and dining—that is life in an English country house. For myself, I prefer the harsher music of a military band.”

“Do you mean that you wish to go into the army?”

“I mean that I should like to be a soldier, if my sword and my sympathies could go together; but that they never can, so it’s of no use to think about it. Do you see that belt of pines straight ahead, and the green slope beyond, sprinkled over with elms? That’s Castletowers. The house will come into sight directly, at the turn of the road.”

And then the conversation strayed to other topics, and Saxon told his friend how William Trefalden was coming down on Thursday; and by that time they had reached the park gates, and were driving up to the beautiful old red house, which looked as if dyed in the sunsets of many centuries.

Then the Earl took his guest round to the stables, built on the princely scale of the old

Elizabethan days, and now more than three parts empty. Here Saxon saw the stalls set apart for his two thoroughbreds; and presently Major Vaughan came into the yard, white with dust, leading his own beautiful Arabian, Gulnare, and followed by a docile bay, carrying a lady's saddle; and Saxon found that he had been riding with Mademoiselle Colonna.

After this, they strolled about the gardens, and the Earl initiated Saxon into the topography of the smoking-room, the billiard-room, and all that part of the house called the bachelors' quarters; and then the gong was sounded, and it was time to dress for dinner.

It was Saxon's first entry into the society of ladies; and this fact, coupled with his reluctance to meet the Colonnas, made him somewhat nervous on going into the drawing-room. The ladies, however, were not yet down; and he found only a group of four men standing round the fire. Two of these were Castletowers and Major Vaughan; the third he at once recognised for the dark-eyed Italian whom he had seen at Reichenau; and the fourth was a stranger.

“My friend, Mr. Saxon Trefalden — Signor Colonna—the Reverend Edwin Armstrong,” said Lord Castletowers, getting through the introductions as quickly as he could.

The clergyman bowed somewhat stiffly; but Signor Colonna held out his hand.

“Gervase’s friends are mine,” he said, with a smile of singular sweetness. “I have heard much of you, Mr. Trefalden, and rejoice to know you. Is this your first visit to Castletowers?”

It was evident that he had no more remembrance of Saxon, than Saxon had of the world before the Flood.

At this moment the ladies came in. The Earl, with some ceremony, presented his young friend to his mother, and while Saxon was yet bending over her fair hand, dinner was announced. The Earl immediately gave his arm to Mademoiselle Colonna, Signor Colonna took Lady Castletowers, and the rest followed. Thus it happened that the introduction which Saxon most dreaded was altogether omitted, and that he did not even see Mademoiselle Colonna’s face till he had taken his seat at the dining table. He then looked

up, and, to his intense discomposure, found her superb eyes turned full upon himself.

“My *vis-à-vis* is, I suppose, your young millionaire?” she said presently, to Lord Castletowers. “I have met him before ; but I cannot remember where.”

The Earl laughed, and shook his head.

“Impossible,” he replied. “He has only been a few weeks in England, and ever since you have been with us, you have not been up to town, I think, for a single day.”

“But I may have met him abroad—perhaps at Milan?”

“He has never visited Italy in his life.”

“Well, then, in Paris?”

“And I know that he has never been to Paris. In fact, it is more than improbable that you can have seen him before this evening. I speak thus positively, because I know all the story of his life up to this time ; and a very curious story it is.”

“You must tell it to me,” said Mademoiselle Colonna.

“I will, by-and-by ; and when you have heard

it, you will grant that you are only misled by some accidental resemblance."

Mademoiselle Colonna looked at Saxon again. He was talking to Lady Castletowers, and she could scrutinise his features at her leisure.

"I do not think I shall make any such concession to your narrative powers," she said. "The more closely I look at him, the more convinced I am that we have not only met, but spoken—and not very long since, either. Why, I recognise the very inflections of his voice."

"Nay, madam, I claim to be a Swiss," Saxon was saying. "I was born in Switzerland, and so were my father and grandfather before me."

"But Trefalden is not a Swiss name," said Lady Castletowers.

"No, Trefalden is a Cornish name. We are of Cornish descent."

The colour flew to Olimpia Colonna's face at the discovery conveyed to her by these few words.

"I knew it was no accidental resemblance," she said, with a troubled look. "I remember all about him now, and he remembers me. I knew he did—I saw it in his face."

“Then you really have met before?”

“Yes, in Switzerland, a few weeks ago. I— I was so unobservant as to mistake him for an ordinary peasant, and I—that is to say, we—offended him cruelly. My father has forgotten all about it; but I shall tender him a formal apology by-and-by. I hope he will forgive me.”

“Forgive you!” echoed the Earl, in a low, passionate tone.

But Miss Colonna did not seem to hear him.

Later in the evening, when the little party was dispersed about the drawing-room, she turned to Saxon, who was bending over some engravings on a side-table, and said:—

“If it were not that oblivion and pardon are thought to go hand in hand, I should ask to be remembered by Mr. Trefalden. As it is, I can only hope that he has forgotten me.”

Saxon bowed profoundly.

“I should be much concerned for my memory, madam,” he replied, “if that were possible.”

She looked at him inquiringly.

“Is that a sarcasm,” said she, “or a compliment?”

"I did not mean it for either."

"What is it, then?"

"A simple statement of a simple fact. Mademoiselle Colonna is associated in my memory with the most eventful day of my life, and had I tried to forget that I once had the honour of meeting her, it would not have been possible for me to do so. On that day, I first learned the change in my fortunes."

Miss Colonna smiled and put out her hand.

"Then I insist on being forgiven," she said. "I will not consent to be the one disagreeable episode in so bright a story."

"But I can't forgive you twice over," replied Saxon bashfully, scarcely daring to touch the tips of her delicate fingers.

"Which means that you have done so already? Thanks. And now we must be friends; and you shall come and talk to my father, who is deeply interested in your free and beautiful country. Would that our own beloved Italy were half so happy!"

And with this she took Saxon's arm, and they crossed over to where her father and Major

Vaughan were sitting together in earnest conversation.

In the meanwhile, Lord Castletowers was wishing himself in Saxon's place, and thinking how gladly he would have given the best hunter in his stables to be so wronged, and so solicited, by Olimpia Colonna.

CHAPTER II.

SIGNOR COLONNA'S DEN IN THE OCTAGON TOWER.

GIULIO COLONNA was never so immersed in political labours as during this time that he and his daughter had been staying at Castletowers. He sat all day, and sometimes more than half the night at his desk, answering letters, drawing up declarations and addresses, and writing fiery pamphlets in Italian, French, and English. Olimpia helped him for many hours each day, often rising at dawn to correct his proofs and decipher his secret correspondence. Every now and then, a special messenger would come down from London by the mid-day express ; or a batch of telegraphic despatches would arrive, full of secret information, and so worded as to be unintelligible to all save the receiver. And sometimes Lord Castletowers, after a hasty summons

to the octagon tower, would order out his black mare, and, laden with messages, gallop over to the station as furiously as if the very lives of his guests depended on his speed.

Then Lady Castletowers would look after him with a little deprecating smile; and, turning to the morning visitor who might happen to be sitting with her at the time, would say something about her poor dear friend, Signor Colonna, and those foolish intrigues in which he still persisted in taking so much interest; or would, perhaps, let fall a word of half-implied regret that her son, the Earl, whose English politics were so thoroughly unexceptionable, should yet suffer himself to be attracted by the romance of this so-called "Italian cause."

But the intrigues went on nevertheless; and her ladyship, who was quite satisfied if Signor Colonna showed himself at the dinner-table, and Olimpia spent her evenings in the drawing-room, little dreamed that that room in the octagon tower was the focus of a fast-coming revolution. Fearful things—things that would have frozen the bluest blood in her ladyship's veins—were

being done daily under her very roof. Strategical operations were mapped out, and military proclamations translated, by the hand of her own son. Subscriptions to the cause poured in by every post. Revolutionary commissions in embryo, revolutionary regiments were countersigned by Colonna, and despatched in her ladyship's own post-bag, under cover to all kinds of mysterious Smiths and Browns in different quarters of London; and as for musket-money, it was a marvel that the very cheques which were forwarded to her house for that purpose did not explode, and reduce the place to ashes.

In the meanwhile a great storm was really brewing, and the leaven of resistance was at work among the masses of Southern Italy. An insurrection had already broken out in Sicily; but it had hitherto attracted no very serious notice in London or Paris. Honourable members attended to it but slightly, as a mere formidable riot, or a salutary warning to sovereigns who misgoverned their subjects, and neglected the advice of their neighbours. But Giulio Colonna, in his little room at Castletowers,

knew well enough how to interpret the first faint mutterings of that distant thunder. He knew where it would next be heard, and where the first shaft of the lightning would fall. His own pen was the conductor—his own breath the wind by which the storm-clouds were driven.

And yet Colonna was no soldier. A braver man never lived; but the sword was not his weapon. A student in his youth, a delicate man at his prime, he was born for the cabinet and not the camp. Bodies need brains as much, and sometimes more, than they need hands; and Colonna was the brain of his party. He was never more useful to his friends, he was never more formidable to his enemies, than when bending over his desk, pale and sleepless, and never weary.

The Earl of Castletowers had described his friend rightly when he spoke of him as a man of antique virtue. His virtues were precisely of the antique type—so precisely that his detractors ranked some of them but little above vices. In his creed, as in the creed of the Roman citizen

during the great days of the Republic, the love of country held the highest place. Italy was his God. To serve her, he thankfully accepted privation, contumely, personal danger, banishment, and oppression. To serve her, he stooped to beg, to dissimulate, to mask hatred with smiles, and contempt with courtesy. To say that he was ready at any moment to lay down his own life for Italian liberty was to say nothing. He was ready to sacrifice his daughter, like Jephtha; or his dearest friends; or his good repute; or innocent blood, if innocent blood were the indispensable condition of success. These were indeed antique virtues—virtues that had nothing in common with the spirit of Christian chivalry. His worst enemies could not deny that Giulio Colonna was a hero, and a patriot. His bitterest slanderers never hinted a doubt of his sincerity. But it was a significant fact that his blindest worshippers, ready as they were to compare him with every hero that made the glory of classic Greece and Rome, never dreamed of linking his name with that of Bruce or Bayard, Washington or La Rochejaquelin. He was, in very truth, more

Pagan than Christian ; and they instinctively recognised the fact.

Such was Giulio Colonna—a great man, a noble man, an heroic man, after his kind ; a man of vast intellectual powers, of untiring steadfastness, of inexhaustible energy and devotion ; but a man wholly dominated by a single idea, and unable to recognise any but his own arbitrary standard of right and wrong.

It was the morning after Saxon's arrival at Castletowers. The three young men were out upon a long ramble, and the Colonnas were busy together in their quiet study in the octagon tower. It was a very small room—a mere closet—with one deep mullioned window, overlooking a formal space of garden. A few prints on the walls, a few books on the shelves, a bureau, a table heaped with letters and papers, three or four chairs, and a davenport in the recess of the window, were all the furniture it contained. At the davenport sat Olimpia, copying a long list of memoranda, while her father was busy with his morning's correspondence at the larger table. He had received a budget of some forty letters

by that post, and was going through them rapidly and methodically, endorsing some for future reference, selecting others for immediate reply, and flinging the rest into a waste-paper basket beside his chair. When the last was disposed of, his daughter lifted up her head, and said :—

“What news to-day, *padre mio* ?”

The Italian sighed wearily.

“None,” he replied. “None of any value. A few lines from Bertaldi; but he has nothing new to tell. Things remain about the same in Sicily. Garibaldi wants money. Nothing can be done without it—at least, nothing worth doing.”

“Better to attempt nothing than make a useless demonstration,” said Olimpia, quickly.

“Aye—far better.”

“Is that all from Italy ?”

“All.”

“And from London? I thought I saw Lord Barmouth’s handwriting.”

“Yes—he sends a cheque for twelve pounds; and here are three or four others, and a sub-

scription from Birmingham — not twenty-five pounds in all ! ”

Olimpia rose, and laid her hand lovingly upon her father's shoulder.

“ Do not be discouraged, *padre mio*,” she said. “ The movement is scarcely begun, and our friends have not yet realised the importance of the crisis. The English, we must remember, are not roused to enthusiasm by a few words. When we have proved to them that our people are in earnest, they will help us with hearts and hands.”

“ And in the meanwhile, our volunteers are to be slaughtered like sheep, for want of proper weapons ! ” replied Colonna, bitterly. “ No, Olimpia, it is *now* that we need funds—now, when the struggle is scarcely begun, and the work lies all before us. There can be no real discipline without arms, food, and clothing ; and without discipline, all the valour in the world is of no avail. What can weaponless men do to prove themselves in earnest ? ”

“ Die,” said she, with kindling cheek and eye.

“ Yes—we can all do that ; but we prefer to do

it with something better than a pike or a scythe in our hands."

Saying this, he pushed back his chair, and began walking gloomily up and down the narrow space between the window and the door. He came presently to a sudden halt, looked full into his daughter's eyes, and said :—

"We want twenty-five thousand pounds, at the very least, before another week has passed over our heads."

"So much as that? Alas! it is impossible."

"I am not sure that it is impossible," said Colonna, still looking at her.

"No? What do you mean?"

"Sit down, my child—here, by my side—and I will tell you."

She sat down, and he took her hand between both of his own. Perhaps her heart throbbed for a moment in some vague apprehension of what might next be said; but neither her face nor her hand betrayed emotion.

"There is a young man in this house," said the Italian, "to whom such a sum as twenty-five thousand pounds would be of less import-

ance than a handful of bajocchi to one of our volunteers."

"Mr. Trefalden?"

"Mr. Trefalden. He is worth four or five millions."

"Yes—I remember. We were talking of it at breakfast, a few weeks ago."

"We were; and I promised myself at the time that I would move heaven and earth to gain him over to the cause."

"It will not be difficult."

"In the ordinary degree, not at all; but we must do more than that."

"It is hopeless to dream that he will give us twenty-five thousand pounds," said Miss Colonna, hastily.

"I mean him to give us a million."

"A million! Are you mad!"

"I mean him to give us a million—two millions—three millions—all he possesses, if less than all will not suffice to set our Italy free! Listen, *Olimpia mia*—we have been told the strange story of this young man's life. We know how pure, and pastoral, and unworldly it has been.

We find him simple and enthusiastic as a child—his heart open to every generous impression—his soul susceptible to every sense of beauty. To such a nature all high things are possible—with such a nature, all that we desire may be done. I look upon this youth as the destined liberator—as the destined sacrifice ! ”

Olimpia sighed, and shook her head.

“ If he were Italian,” she said, “ it would be easy—and justifiable.”

“ Justifiable ! ” echoed her father, with an angry gesture. “ In our holy cause, all means are justifiable. How often must I repeat that to you, Olimpia ? ”

“ It is a point, *padre mio*, on which we can never think quite alike,” she replied, gently. “ Let it pass.”

He dropped her hand ; rose abruptly ; and walked restlessly to and fro, muttering to himself. She also rose, and stood, waiting, till he should speak again. Then he drew his hand across his brow, and said, harshly :—

“ The burden of this work must rest chiefly on you, Olimpia.”

"I will do what I can," she replied.

"Do you know what you have to do?"

"I think so. I have done it often enough before."

Colonna shook his head.

"No," he said, "that is not enough. You must make him love you—you must make him marry you."

"Father!"

"It is the only certain way to achieve our purpose. He is young and impressionable—you have beauty, fascination, eloquence, and that nameless sway over the will and sympathy of others which has already won hundreds of ardent spirits to the cause. In a week he will be at your feet."

"You ask me to sell myself!" exclaimed Olimpia, with a magnificent scorn upon her lip that would have become an offended goddess.

"For Italy."

She clasped her hands together, in a wild, passionate way; and went over to the window.

"For Italy," repeated Colonna, solemnly.
"For the cause to which I have consecrated

you, my only child, since the moment when you were first laid smiling in my arms. For the cause in which my own youth and manhood have been spent. For the cause in which I should not hesitate to go to the stake to-morrow, or to shed your heart's blood with my own hand."

"I had rather give my heart's blood than do this thing," said Olimpia, with averted face.

"The martyr may not choose from what palm his branch shall be severed," replied her father, sternly.

She made no answer, and for some moments they were both silent. Then Colonna spoke again.

"With money now at our command," he said, "success would be certain. Without it, nothing but failure awaits us. Twenty-five thousand pounds, judiciously spent, would equip six thousand men; and with six thousand at his back, Garibaldi would enter Palermo in the course of a few days. But what does he say himself?—that whatever is done must be done in the name of Sardinia? In the name of Sardinia, that gives neither a soldier nor a scudo to the struggle!

In the name of Sardinia, whose king dares not countenance our effort, but who is ready to reap the fruits of our victories! No, no, *Olimpia*—it is not twenty-five thousand pounds that we need. It is a million. With a million we should free not only the Sicilies, but the Romagna, and reconstruct the great republic. With a million, we may reject the patronage of Victor Emmanuel, and the whole monarchical party!”

“With but one million?” said Miss Colonna, doubtfully.

“With but one—or two, if two be needed and we have two at command. What is one man’s wealth, or one woman’s hand, in comparison with results such as these? What is any private interest, when valued against the honour and freedom of a great country?”

Again Olimpia was silent.

“And then,” pursued he, eagerly, “with a Roman Senate at the Capitol and a Dictator at the head of the Roman legions, we shall do that which France and Sardinia together failed of accomplishing. We shall expel the Austrian

from the soil, and buy back Venetia with our blood ! ”

Olimpia turned at last. Her face was very pale, and the burnished gold of her hair crowned her in the sunlight, like a glory.

“ Enough,” she said, calmly. “ This young man’s wealth shall be bought for Italy, if aught that I can give will purchase it.”

Colonna took her in his arms, and kissed her brow.

“ There speaks the true Colonna ! ” said he. “ Had my daughter even given her heart to some other, I should have expected this concession—aye, though he had been the best and bravest of our Italian chivalry ; but as it is, I think her duty and her love may yet go together.”

“ Nay—we will put love out of the question,” said she, coldly.

“ Heaven grant that I may live to see that day when, through thy deed, my Olimpia, our beloved country shall be free from the shores of the Adriatic to the waters of Tarento ! ”

“ Amen,” replied Olimpia, and left the room.

CHAPTER III.

THE LAST MEET OF THE SEASON.

WHEN Mr. Trefalden arrived at Castletowers at ten o'clock on Thursday morning, he was somewhat dismayed to find the courtyard crowded with carriages, the terrace full of ladies, and the open, lawn-like space in front of the house all alive with scarlet coats, horses, grooms, and hounds. Having walked across from the station by the field paths, he came upon the noisy scene all at once, and learned from half a dozen voices together, that it was the last meet of the season.

Fully expecting to find his appointment forgotten and Saxon among the riders, he passed on to the house, where the first person he met was Miss Colonna, *en amazone*, with her riding-whip in her hand, and a drooping feather in her hat.

"Ah, Mr. Trefalden," she said, "we have just been talking of you. You will find none but enemies here."

"I trust that I am not to include Made-moiselle Colonna among that number."

"Of course not," she replied, with a smile that had some little mockery in it. "Is not Mr. Trefalden enrolled among the Friends of Italy? By the way, you have not yet seen yourself in our printed report for March. I have placed your name at the head of a column."

The lawyer bowed, and professed himself infinitely flattered.

"May I ask," said he, "why I am so unfortunate as to have provoked all this enmity to which you refer?"

"Because your presence deprives us of the pleasure of your cousin's society, and prevents him from putting on a scarlet coat, and distinguishing himself as a mighty hunter before the ladies."

"When he would infallibly have broken his neck," said Mr. Trefalden, drily.

"By-the-by, why did you not tell me he was

your cousin, that day we met at Reichenau?" asked Miss Colonna, with provoking directness.

"I really cannot tell—unless I supposed the fact could have no kind of interest for you."

"Or were you afraid I should want to enlist him also? But here is my steed."

"May I be permitted to assist you to mount, Mademoiselle Colonna?"

"Many thanks," she said, as, having taken her tiny foot with the reverence of a devotee, Mr. Trefalden lifted her dexterously to the saddle, and arranged the folds of her habit. "I had really no idea, Mr. Trefalden, that you, a doctor learned in the law, were also an accomplished cavalier."

"Why not, Signora?"

"Indeed, I can hardly say; but I should as soon have thought of exacting escort-duty from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Do you hunt?"

"I have hunted; but not for several years. I have no time for cruelty, as a fine art."

"A subtle distinction, I presume, between business and pleasure," said she, laughingly. "I beg you to understand, however, Mr. Trefalden,

that *I* do not hunt at all. I only ride to cover, and see the hounds throw off. I love to hear their 'gallant chiding'—but I am always sorry for the fox."

"I fear Lord Castletowers will not endorse that amiable sentiment," replied the lawyer, as the Earl came running down the broad stone steps, followed by some five or six other gentlemen. Seeing Mademoiselle Colonna already in the saddle, he bit his lip and said, with unconcealed disappointment:—

"Has Vaughan again anticipated me in my office?"

The proud blood rose to Olimpia's cheek.

"To assist a lady whose horse waits at the door, is, I believe, the office of whatever gentleman may be at hand, Lord Castletowers," she replied, haughtily. "Mr. Trefalden was so obliging as to help me to mount this morning."

The Earl turned, in some confusion, and shook hands with his lawyer.

"I beg your pardon, Trefalden," he said, hastily. "I had not observed you. Won't you take a run with us? Ah, no—I forgot. You

are here to-day on business ; but we shall meet at dinner. You will find your cousin in the dining-room."

And with this he sprang upon his black mare, reined up beside Mademoiselle Colonna, and began speaking in a low, earnest tone, that was audible to her alone. But the lady answered him briefly, bade Mr. Trefalden a courteous good morning, and rode swiftly out of the court-yard, followed by the redcoats as by a guard of honour.

Mr. Trefalden looked after them, and smiled thoughtfully.

"Poor Castletowers!" said he to himself. "She has no heart for anything but Italy."

And then he went into the house, where he found the breakfast over, the dining-room deserted, and everybody out upon the terrace. It was a large assembly, consisting chiefly of ladies, and the general interest was at that moment centred in the hunting party, then gaily winding its way down the green slope in front of the house.

When the last gleam of scarlet had disap-

peared, Mr. Trefalden went up to Saxon, who was standing somewhat dolefully apart from the rest, laid his hand upon his shoulder, and said :—

“ ‘Why so dull and mute, young sinner?’ Is it so hard a fate to stay in-doors and read through a bagful of musty parchments, when others are breaking their necks over five-barred gates? ”

Saxon turned with his frank smile, and grasped his cousin's hand.

“It did seem hard a minute ago,” replied he; “but now that you are come, I don't care any longer. Castletowers said we were to go into the library.”

“Then we will go at once, and get our business over. I hope your brains are in good order for work this morning, Saxon? ”

But Saxon laughed, and shook his head doubtfully.

“You must be my brains in matters of this kind, cousin William,” said he. “I understand nothing about money, except how to spend it.”

“Then, my dear fellow, you know more than I gave you credit for,” replied Mr. Trefalden. “Money is a very pleasant and desirable thing, but there are three great difficulties connected with it—how to get it, how to keep it, and how to spend it; and I am not at all sure that to do the last in the best way is not the hardest task of the three. My business with you to-day, however, concerns the second of those propositions. I want to show you how to keep your money; for I fear there are only too many who enjoy teaching you the way to spend it.”

They had now reached the library, a long, low room, panelled and furnished with dark oak, and looking out upon the same quiet garden that was commanded by the window of Signor Colonna's little study. The recesses at each side of the fireplace, and the whole length of the opposite wall, were fitted with shelves protected at the edges by strips of stamped and gilded leather. The books upon these shelves were mostly antique folios and quartos in heavy bindings of brown and mottled calf, and consisted of heavy archæological and theological works, county histories,

chronologies, sermons, dictionaries, peerages, and parliamentary records. Here and there a little row of British essayists, or a few modern books in covers of bright cloth, broke the ponderous monotony ; but the Castletowers collection, being chiefly made up of those works which it is said no gentleman's library should be without, was but a dull affair upon the whole, and attracted few readers. A stag's skull and antlers presided spectrally above the door, and an elaborate genealogical tree of the Castletowers family, heavily framed in old black oak, hung over the mantelpiece like a hatchment.

"Well, cousin William," said Saxon, with an anticipative yawn, "where is the bag of parchments?"

But Mr. Trefalden laid only his pocket-book and a small case-map on the table before him.

"The bag," he replied, "was but a figure of speech—a legal fiction. I have no parchments whatever to inflict upon you—nothing but a few columns of figures, a letter or two, and a map of Western Asia."

Saxon opened his eyes.

“What in the world have I to do with Western Asia?” said he.

“That is just what I am here to tell you.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW OVERLAND ROUTE.

“IN the first place, Saxon,” said Mr. Trefalden, “I have done for you what I suppose you would never have thought of doing for yourself: I have had your account made up at Drummond’s. I confess that the result has somewhat surprised me.”

“Why so?”

“Well, not because you have spent a great deal of money in a very short time, for I anticipated that; but because so many of your cheques appear to have gone into the pockets of your friends. Here, for instance, is the name of Sir Charles Burgoyne — a name which recurs no fewer than fourteen times. The first entry is

for five hundred and twenty-five pounds; date, the twenty-fourth of March."

"That was for the mare and cab," said Saxon, quickly. "It was his own favourite mare, and he let me have her. He had been offered five hundred and fifty, only a day or two before."

Mr. Trefalden smiled dubiously, and glanced back at a memorandum entered in his note-book a few weeks before, when sitting behind that morning paper in a window of the Erectheum club-house. The memorandum told a different tale. He contented himself, however, with writing the words "mare and cab" against the sum, and then went on.

"Second cheque—six hundred and ten pounds; date, the twenty-ninth of March."

"My two riding horses and their equipments," explained Saxon.

"Humph! and were these also Sir Charles Burgoyne's favourites?"

"No, not at all. He was kind enough to buy them for me, from a friend who was reducing his establishment."

Mr. Trefalden checked off the six hundred and ten pounds, as before.

“Third cheque—two thousand pounds; date, the thirty-first of March.”

“Oh, that’s nothing,” said Saxon. “That’s not spent—it’s only borrowed.”

“By Sir Charles Burgoyne?”

“Yes.”

“And the next for two thousand five hundred, dated April the third?”

“I—I rather think that’s borrowed also,” replied Saxon.

“Then come various smaller cheques—four hundred, two hundred and fifteen, fifty-seven, one hundred and five, and so forth; and by-and-by another heavy sum—eight-hundred and fifty pounds. Do you remember what that was for?”

“Yes, to be sure; that was for the phaeton and pair; and even Castletowers said it was not dear.”

Mr. Trefalden turned to another page of his note-book.

“It seems to me,” observed he, “that Lord Castletowers is the only young man of your

acquaintance whose friendship has not been testified in some kind of pecuniary transaction. Here, now, is the Honourable Edward Brandon. Has he also been generously depopulating his stables in your favour ? ”

Saxon laughed, and shook his head.

“ I should think not, indeed ! ” said he. “ Poor Brandon has nothing to sell. He hires a horse now and then, when he has a sovereign to spare—and that is seldom enough.”

“ Which, being translated, means, I presume, that the two thousand and odd pounds paid over at different times to Mr. Brandon are simply loans ? ”

“ Just so.”

“ And Guy Greville, Esquire—who is he ?

“ One of our Erectheum men ; but that’s a mere trifle.”

“ You call two hundred and fifty pounds a mere trifle ? Howard Patrick Fitz Hugh, Esquire—four hundred pounds. Is he another member of your club ? ”

“ Yes, a very pleasant fellow—an Irishman.”

“ Both loans, of course ? ”

Saxon nodded.

"Then come a number of miscellaneous cheques, evidently payments to tradesmen—one, I see, of nearly a thousand to Hunt and Roskell. How much of that went for the prima donna's bracelet, you young rogue?"

"I haven't the least idea. Gillingwater takes care of the bills."

"There is another little item that must not be forgotten," said the lawyer; "namely, that trifle of fifty-nine thousand pounds to Mr. Laurence Greatorex."

"Which is not spent, but deposited," said Saxon, sagely.

"Exactly so; and which might have been deposited to equal advantage in the crater of Vesuvius. But enough of details. Have you any notion of what the sum total amounts to?"

"None whatever."

"What do you say to seventy-eight thousand six hundred and twelve pounds?"

"I am afraid I have no original remarks to offer upon the fact," replied Saxon, with un-

abated cheerfulness. "What is your opinion, cousin William?"

"My opinion is that a young man who contrives to get through more than fifteen thousand pounds of uninvested capital per week, would find the air of Hanwell highly conducive to his general health."

"But, cousin, do you think I have done wrongly in spending so much?"

"I think you have done foolishly, and obtained no kind of equivalent for your money. I also think you have been unscrupulously plundered by your acquaintances; but, after all, you have gained some little experience of life, and you can afford to pay for it. To tell you the truth, I foresaw something of this kind for you; and, having introduced you to Lord Castletowers, I purposely kept myself and my advice in the background for a few weeks, and let you take your first plunge into the world in whatever way you pleased. I had no wish, Saxon, to play Mentor to your Telemachus."

"I should have been very grateful to you, though," said Saxon.

“Well, I am just going to begin, so you can be grateful by-and-by,” replied Mr. Trefalden, with his pleasant smile. “I am here to-day for the purpose of inoculating you with financial wisdom, and pointing out to you how absolutely necessary it is that your fortune should be invested to advantage.”

“You told me that before.”

“Yes; but now I am about to prove it. Eight weeks ago, young man, you were worth four million seven hundred and seventy-six thousand pounds. Since that time, you have disembarassed yourself of a good deal of the odd money; but putting that aside, we will, if you please, for the sake of convenience, reckon your fortune in round numbers at four millions and a half.”

“Certainly. At four millions and a half,” repeated Saxon, wearily.

“Well, have you ever asked yourself how long your four millions and a half are likely to last, if you simply go on as you have begun?”

“No—but they would last out my life, of course.”

“They would last you just six years, nine weeks, and three days.”

Saxon was speechless.

“You can now judge for yourself,” said Mr. Trefalden, “whether your money ought, or ought not, to be placed at interest, and whether I am making myself needlessly obnoxious to you to-day, when you might have been galloping after the fox. What you require, Saxon, is a fixed income.”

“Yes—I see that.”

“And as I told you long since, your property, if well invested, will bring you a princely revenue. At five per cent, it will produce two hundred and fifty thousand pounds a year; and at seven and a half per cent, three hundred and seventy-five thousand—more than a thousand pounds a day. I believe, Saxon, that I have found you an investment at seven and a half per cent for as much of your fortune as you may be inclined to put into it.”

“A thousand pounds a day!—seven and a half per cent!” stammered Saxon. “But isn’t that usury, cousin William?”

“Usury!” repeated Mr. Trefalden, with an amused smile. “Why, my dear fellow, no man of business ever calculates on making less than seven or eight per cent of his capital!”

“But then he *is* a man of business, and his skill and experience make part of his capital; so he ought to gain more than a rich idler who only invests his wealth for an income,” replied Saxon, with a flash of practical good sense that showed how easily he could master even the science of money, if he chose to think about it.

Mr. Trefalden was positively startled. He had so accustomed himself of late to think of his young kinsman as a mere child in worldly affairs, that he had, perhaps insensibly, fallen into the error of under-estimating his abilities.

“There is some truth in what you observe, Saxon,” said he; “but it is a truth that does not affect the present question. It would take too long, and lead us too far from the subject in hand, to go into it philosophically; but you may rely on my experience when I tell you that, as a private individual, you have every right to accept seven and a half per cent, if you can obtain it

with safety. My aim is to ensure you a liberal income ; and if I have been somewhat tardy about it, you must blame my over-anxiety, and not my want of zeal."

"Dear cousin William, I have never dreamed of blaming either !" exclaimed Saxon, warmly.

"I have throughout been keenly sensible of the responsibility that devolves upon me in this matter," continued Mr. Trefalden. "And I confess that, up to the present time, I have been cautious to timidity."

"I am sure of it—sure of it," said Saxon, with outstretched hand ; "and am so heartily grateful that I know not in what words to put all I should like to say."

"I am very glad you place such confidence in me," replied the lawyer, returning the young man's cordial grasp ; but the voice and the hand were both cold and unimpulsive.

With this he turned to his papers, placed them ready for reference, and opened out the map upon the table. Then he paused, as if collecting his thoughts upon the subject on which he was next about to speak. Prompt man of business as

he was, one might almost have thought that Mr. Trefalden was reluctant to approach the very topic which he had come all the way from London to discuss. At length he began :—

“Like most cautious persons, Saxon, I am no friend to speculation ; but I do not, like those who are over cautious, confound speculation with enterprise. In England our great public works are almost invariably originated and conducted by private bodies ; and herein lies the chief spring of our national prosperity. Enterprise has made us what we are : mere speculation would have ruined us. What I have to propose to you, Saxon, is an enterprise of extraordinary importance—a gigantic enterprise, as regards its results, and one of comparatively trifling magnitude as regards its cost. But you must give me all your attention.”

“Indeed, I am doing so.”

“I need not ask if you know the ordinary line of route from England to India, by way of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea ? ”

“The Overland Route ? Certainly—upon the map.”

“And you know the track of our merchant vessels to India and China, round the Cape of Good Hope?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“Then oblige me by glancing at this map, and following the line which I have marked upon it in red ink. It begins, you see, at Dover, and proceeds by Calais and Marseilles to Alexandria, where . . .”

“But I see two red lines crossing the Mediterranean,” interrupted Saxon.

“We will follow this one first. At Alexandria it joins the railway, is carried across the Isthmus to Suez, thence traverses the Red Sea to Aden, and proceeds by the Arabian Sea to Bombay. This route is the prescriptive property of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam-packet Company. Following it, one may travel from London to Bombay in twenty-four days; and we have hitherto been accustomed to regard the accomplishment of this fact as one of the triumphs of modern civilisation.”

“And so it is!” exclaimed Saxon.

“Aye, but it costs over a hundred pounds,”

replied Mr. Trefalden ; “ and the traveller who cannot afford so large a fare must go round by the Cape, and so lose either ninety-four days in a steamer, or four months in a sailing-vessel. Now look at my other red line, and see where it departs from the first.”

“ It passes through the Straits of Messina, touches at Cyprus instead of at Malta, and goes direct to Sidon, instead of to Alexandria,” said Saxon, now both surprised and interested.

“ Precisely so ; and from Sidon takes an almost direct course to Palmyra, whence it follows the valley of the Euphrates, and comes out upon the Persian Gulf at the point where the united waters of the Euphrates and Tigris empty themselves into the sea, one hundred and thirty miles below Korna.”

“ And then it goes straight down the Persian Gulf, and over to Bombay,” said Saxon.

Mr. Trefalden looked up, with his finger on the map.

“ If,” said he, “ this line from Sidon to the sea represented a fine railway in connection with a first-class steam-packet service at either ex-

tremity, which route to India do you think you would prefer?"

"This, of course. No man in his senses could do otherwise. The distance, to begin with, must be much less?"

"About twelve or fourteen hundred miles."

"And then there would be far more of the journey performed by land—and through what a land! Palmyra—the plains of Babylon—Bassora! By Jove! one would make the journey to India for the mere sake of visiting places so famous in the history of the ancient world."

"I confess that I regard this project from a less archæological point of view," replied Mr. Trefalden. "Now hear the practical side of it, and understand that I am giving you only approximate facts—facts in the rough, before they have been squared and smoothed by surveyors and accountants. We calculate that this line of railway will extend over about seven hundred and fifty, or eight hundred miles; that is to say, it will exceed the line now laid down between Calais and Toulon by not more than a

hundred and fifty or two hundred miles. It will unquestionably draw to itself the whole merchant traffic of India, China, Persia, and Ceylon. It will be the nearest route to Australia, and it will bring Bombay within twelve or fourteen days of London."

"It takes one's breath away!" said Saxon.

Mr. Trefalden smiled a smile of quiet triumph.

"But this is not all," said he. "We have reason to believe that at Hit, where there are mineral springs, we shall find coal; and as Hit lies very nearly half-way between Sidon and the Gulf, we shall be enabled to supply our steam-service at both shores, and our whole line of railway, from one central source."

"Those must be the bituminous fountains mentioned by Herodotus," said Saxon, quickly; "the fountains of Is that supplied asphalte for cementing the walls of Babylon!"

"If possible, Saxon, oblige me by confining your attention to the nineteenth century," expostulated the lawyer. "Try to think of Babylon as a railway station, and of Palmyra as a

place where the guard allows twenty minutes for refreshments. Yes—I knew that would appal you. Now, perhaps, you will give me your opinion of the New Overland Route.”

“My opinion!” replied Saxon. “You might as well ask my opinion of the geology of Uranus!”

“That is the very consideration which deters me from recommending it to you as an investment.”

“Oh, you need not let it do that,” laughed Saxon. “I am as ignorant of one business matter as of another. I told you just now that you must be my brains whenever money came in question!”

“But what makes it still more difficult is that in this case I may not let you benefit by any other person’s brains,” replied Mr. Trefalden. “There are many interests to be combated in the promotion of such a scheme as this; and it is of importance that we keep it, for the present, profoundly secret. Whether you interest yourself in it or not, I must bind you over, Saxon, to breathe no word of this matter to any living ear.”

Saxon gave the promise unhesitatingly ; but did not understand why it should be necessary.

“ Because we must not rouse opposition before our system is matured,” explained Mr. Trefalden.

“ But if the new route is so great an improvement,” urged Saxon, “ who would oppose it ? ”

“ All those persons who are interested in the old one,” replied his cousin, smiling. “ The Peninsular and Oriental Steam-packet Company—the shareholders and directors of the Suez Railway—the forty thousand English who colonise Alexandria.”

“ And would all those persons be ruined ? ”

“ Every reformation ruins somebody,” observed Mr. Trefalden, philosophically.

“ Yes, but the reformer is bound to balance present evil against future good. Would the future good, in this case, outweigh the present evil ? ”

“ Unquestionably.”

“ In what way ? ”

Mr. Trefalden was momentarily puzzled. He had contemplated this subject from all sides except the one now presented to him. The

benevolent point of view had never occurred to him.

“Well,” he suggested, “it will give employment to thousands.”

“But it will throw thousands out of employment.”

“It will promote commerce, extend the boundaries of civilisation, improve Arabia . . .”

“I wouldn’t help to ruin forty thousand English for the sake of improving Arabia,” interrupted Saxon, hastily.

“—— and bring the shores of England and Hindostan so near that, were another mutiny to break out, we could land our troops at Bombay within twelve days after receiving the intelligence. The value of that possibility alone is incalculable.”

“That is true; but . . .”

“And of our absolute success,” continued Mr. Trefalden, “there can be no kind of doubt. I have been almost unwilling, Saxon, to embark you in an enterprise the advantages of which, however obvious to practical men, are not open to immediate test; but it is my duty to tell you

that I have never known so brilliant an opening for the employment of capital."

"But . . ."

"Seven and a half per cent is merely the rate of interest offered by the company while the works are in progress; but when once the route is completed, the returns will be enormous. Your seven and half per cent, my dear fellow, will become twenty-five, perhaps fifty."

"I don't want twenty-five, or fifty," replied Saxon. "I have more money now than I know what to do with."

"I am sure you will always make good use of whatever wealth you possess," said Mr. Trefalden.

"And it would break my heart to injure all those who live by the present system. Why, for instance, should I desire to ruin the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Packet Company?"

"We hope to do no such thing," said Mr. Trefalden. "We shall propose a coalition, and probably employ the very same vessels."

"And then the English colony at Alexandria!"

"Sidon will become what Alexandria is now—

or rather will become a far more important place than Alexandria has ever been since the days of her ancient prosperity. Just as we now require banks, warehouses, quays, and churches at Alexandria, we shall then require them at Sidon. The Alexandrian colonists are wealthy and enterprising: they will simply remove to the new port, and in ten years' time will be richer than if they had remained where they were."

"Do you really think so?"

"I do not think it; I know it. And the Suez Railway Company will fare no worse than the rest. We shall in all probability take their whole body of officials into our service, and incorporate the shareholders' interests with our own. But the fact is, Saxon, you know too little of life to be able to judge a question of this kind; and I see you do not take kindly to the idea, so we will say no more about it."

"I could not have borne to do harm," said Saxon; "but now that you explain the matter so fully, I am quite willing . . ."

But Mr. Trefalden would not hear of it.

"No, no," he said, coldly, gathering up his

papers and folding his map. "I was anxious to do all that was possible for your interests; but it is, perhaps, better that you have nothing to say to the New Route."

"Yet, if you think well of it . . ."

"I think so well of it, that I am about to invest all I possess in the company's shares; but that need not influence you. In point of fact, Saxon, I had rather leave your money in the funds. You will get only three per cent; but then you can re-invest when you please, and the responsibility of advising you will be mine no longer."

"You are vexed with me, cousin William!"

"I regret that you think me capable of advising you to do what would not be right," replied Mr. Trefalden, somewhat stiffly.

"But I think nothing of the kind! I was in error just now; but, as you said only a moment before, I know nothing of life, so pray do not hold me accountable for the sins of my ignorance."

"Tush! not another word," said the lawyer, kindly. "You have said more than enough."

“And the investment?”

“With regard to the investment, I think the most satisfactory course will be for me to leave your money in government stock, at three per cent. Even so, it will bring you one hundred and thirty-five thousand per annum.”

“As you please. It will be less trouble to spend, and will make me quite as happy.”

Mr. Trefalden looked very grave.

“It will also leave you with less to give, and less power to make others happy,” he said.

The careless smile faded from Saxon’s lips.

“I wish I knew what I ought to do!” he exclaimed with an impatient sigh. “What do you really *wish* me to do, cousin William?”

“I had rather not say more than I have already said,” replied Mr. Trefalden. “You have had my advice.”

“So I have—and of course I ought to follow it. You won’t refuse to help me to do so?”

“Certainly not. You need only make your decision, and give me your instructions.”

“I have decided. Invest the money, by all means, and let there be an end of it.”

“And how do you wish me to invest it, Saxon?” asked Mr. Trefalden, with his pen in the ink.

“In the New Route, of course!”

“In one hundred pound shares, in the New Overland Route Steam Packet and Railway Company, Limited,” said the lawyer, scribbling rapidly. “And to what amount?”

“To whatever amount you think proper.”

“Shall we say to the extent of two millions?”

“Why only two? What is to be done with the rest?”

Mr. Trefalden stooped over his writing, and a keen observer might have seen that he changed colour.

“I do not recommend you,” he said, “to invest more at present. As it is, you will be the largest shareholder on the list; and by-and-by, if the company should see fit to raise further capital, you can purchase additional shares. I must trouble you to sign this paper, Saxon—it is a power of attorney, which gives me authority to sell out your two millions.”

The young fellow took his cousin’s pen, and

scrawled his name as carelessly as if he were signing away a couple of pounds.

"You ought never to subscribe your name to a paper without reading it," said Mr. Trefalden. "Remember that. By the way, Saxon, I shall see that you are entered as a director."

"As a director, if you please, then, who is not expected to do anything," replied Saxon, laughing. "Are you also a director?"

"No; I am only solicitor to the company. But now that our business is settled, would you not like to glance over these tables of estimates? Here, you see, is a plan of the route, and here the probable cost per mile, including . . ."

"I beg your pardon, cousin William," interrupted Saxon, "but if our business *is* settled, I protest against hearing another word about the Route. For heaven's sake let us go out, and forget all about it!"

"I fear," said Mr. Trefalden, "that your are utterly incorrigible."

"I know I am. Do you ride?"

"Yes; now and then."

“Then we will go in search of the hunting party.”

So Mr. Trefalden put his tables of estimates back into his pocket-book, and business was banished beyond recall. Then they went round to the stables, and Saxon ordered out his two thoroughbreds.

“I trust you have not forgotten what I said to you at Reichenau on the subject of fetters, Saxon,” said Mr. Trefalden, as they cantered presently across the park. “Mademoiselle Colonna is a dangerous neighbour. Beware of her.”

Saxon laughed gaily.

“Fear nothing on my account, cousin William,” said he. “I have the advantage of Achilles—there isn’t a vulnerable point about me.”

“We are all apt to think so till the arrow finds us out. However, if even your heart is safe, I still say beware—for your cheque-book. Has the Signora levied no patriotic tax upon you yet?”

“None whatever.”

“That’s ominous, with a revolt actually in pro-

gress. She is reserving her strength, that the blow may fall the heavier when it comes. All I implore is, Saxon, that when Mademoiselle Colonna, or her father, shall solicit your support, you will confine yourself to a money contribution—and pledge yourself to nothing foolish.”

“Of course not; but what else could I pledge myself to?”

“Heaven knows! She is capable of asking you to take the command of a troop.”

CHAPTER V.

THE RICH MISS HATHERTON.

AN evening party at Castletowers was a momentous affair. It involved a good deal of expense, and a vast amount of anxiety; for the hereditary^r coffers were ever but scantily furnished, and the hereditary hospitality had to be kept up at any cost. How some of Lady Castletowers' few but elegant entertainments *were* paid for, was a secret known only to her son and herself. Sometimes an oak or two was felled in some remote corner of the park; or the Earl denied himself a horse; or [the carriage was left unrenovated for half a year longer; or her ladyship magnanimously sacrificed her own brief visit to London in the season. Anyhow, these extra expenses were certain to be honourably met in such a manner that

only the givers of the feast were inconvenienced by them.

On the present occasion, however, Lord Castletowers had been compelled to apply to his solicitor for an advance upon his next half-yearly receipts; and when William Trefalden went down that Thursday morning to see his cousin Saxon, he brought with him a cheque for the Earl. The party was fixed for the following evening; but Mr. Trefalden could not be prevailed upon to stay for it. He was obliged, he said, to go back to town that same night by the last train; and he did go back (after making himself very pleasant at dinner) with Saxon's signature in his pocket-book.

It was a very brilliant party, consisting for the most part of county magnates, with a sprinkling of military and a valuable reinforcement of dancing men from town. Among the magnates were Viscount and Lady Esher, a stately couple of the old school, who, being much too dignified to travel by railway, drove over with four horses from Esher Court, a distance of eighteen miles, and remained at Castletowers for the night.

The Viscount was lord lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of the county, and had once held office for three weeks as President of the Board of Perquisites; a fact to which he was never weary of alluding. There, too, were Sir Alexander and Lady Hankley, with their five marriageable daughters; the Bishop of Betchworth and Mrs. Bunyon; Mr. Walkingshaw, of Aylsham, one of the richest commoners in England, with Lady Arabella Walkingshaw, his wife, and their distinguished guest Miss Hatherton of Penzance, whose father had begun life as a common miner, and ended it with a fortune of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. These, together with Lord Boxhill; His Responsibility Prince Quartz Potz, the Prussian Envoy; a few local baronets and their families; an ex-secretary of legation; and a number of lesser stars, parliamentary, clerical, and official, made up the bulk of the assembly. There were also three or four celebrities from the lower paradise of arts and letters—Sir Jones de Robinson, the eminent portrait painter; Signor Katghuttini, the great Dalmatian violinist; Mr. Smythe Browne, the profound

author of "Transcendental Eclecticism," and Mrs. Smythe Browne, who wrote that admirable work on "Woman in the Camp, the Council, and the Church"—a very remarkable couple, whose distinguishing characteristics were that Mrs. Smythe Browne wore short hair and shirt collars, while the sandy locks of Mr. Smythe Browne floated upon his shoulders, and he displayed no vestige of linen whatsoever.

By nine o'clock the guests began to arrive. By ten, the reception rooms were well filled, and dancing commenced in the great hall. Though rarely thrown open to the light of day, the great hall, with its panellings of dark oak, its carved chimney-piece, its gothic rafters, and its stands of ancient armour, some of which dated back to the field of Agincourt, was the glory of Castletowers. Brilliantly lighted, decorated with evergreens and flowers and echoing to the music of a military band, it made such a ball-room as one might vainly seek in any country but our own.

Lady Castletowers received her guests near the door of the first reception-room, looking very stately, and more like Marie Antoinette than ever,

in her splendour of old family diamonds. Gracious to all, as a hostess should be, she nevertheless apportioned her civilities according to a complex code of etiquette. The smile with which she greeted Viscount Esher differed by many degrees from that with which she received Sir Jones de Robinson; and the hand extended to Mrs. Smythe Browne was as the hand of an automaton compared with that which met, with a pressure slight yet cordial, the palm of the rich Miss Hather-ton.

“But where is the noble savage?” said this latter, surveying the room through her double eye-glass. “I have heard so much about him, my dear Lady Castletowers, and I am dying to see him!”

Miss Hatherton was a tall, handsome young woman of about five or six and twenty, with black eyes, fine teeth, a somewhat large, good-natured mouth, and a very decisive manner. She made one of a little privileged knot that was gathered behind Lady Castletowers; and amused herself by criticising the guests as they came up the stairs.

"The noble savage!" repeated Lady Castletowers. "Who *can* you mean, Miss Hatherton?"

"Who should I mean, but this young man who has inherited the famous legacy?"

"Mr. Trefalden? Oh, he was here but a few moments ago. There he stands, by the fireplace."

"The Antinous with the golden curls? But, my dear Lady Castletowers, he's absolutely beautiful! And he doesn't look savage at all. I had expected to see a second Orson—a creature clothed in raiment of camel's hair, or the skins of wild beasts. I declare, I am disappointed."

"Mr. Trefalden is a very pleasant person," said Lady Castletowers, with a faint smile. "And very unassuming."

"Is he, indeed? Pleasant and unassuming—dear me, how very charming! And so rich, too! Worth millions upon millions, I am told. I used at one time to think myself above the reach of want; but I feel like a pauper beside him. Who is this stout person now coming up the stairs, covered with as many stars as the celestial globe?"

But before Lady Castletowers could reply, the name of His Responsibility Prince Quartz Potz was thundered forth by the groom of the chambers, and the noble Prussian was bending profoundly over the fair hand of his hostess.

“What a funny little fat man it is!” said the heiress in her loud way, looking after His Responsibility through her glass as he passed on towards the adjoining room.

“Prince Quartz Potz, my dear Miss Hather-ton, is a highly distinguished person,” said Lady Castletowers, greatly shocked.

“Oh, yes—I know he is.”

“He is distantly connected through his maternal great grandmother, the Margravine of Saxe Hohenhausen, with our own Royal family; and the present Grand Duchess of Zollenstrasse is his third cousin twice removed.”

Miss Hatherton did not seem to be at all impressed by these facts.

“Ah, indeed,” said she, indifferently. “And this fine man with a head like a lion—who is he?”

“Mr. Thompson, the member for Silvermere,” replied Lady Castletowers, when the gentleman

had made his bow and drifted on with the stream.

“What, the great Thompson?—the Thompson who instituted that famous inquiry into the abuses of the Perquisite Office?”

“I do not know what you imply by ‘great,’ my dear Miss Hatherton,” said the Countess, coldly; “but I believe Mr. Thompson’s politics are very objectionable.”

“Ah, I see you don’t like him; but I shall implore you to introduce me, notwithstanding. I have no politics at all, and I admire talent wherever it is to be found. But in the meanwhile, I have lost my heart to Antinous, and am longing to dance with him. Do pray make us known, dear Lady Castletowers.”

“Upon whom does Miss Hatherton desire to confer the honour of her acquaintance?” asked Lord Castletowers, who happened to come by at the moment. “Can I be of any service?”

“Of the utmost. I want to be introduced to this Mr. Trefalden, about whom all the world has been talking for the last five or six weeks.”

“I will perform the office with great pleasure.

Will you allow me to hand you to a seat, while I go in search of him ?”

“Thanks. And be sure you make him dance with me, Lord Castletowers—I want to dance with him above all things. He *can* dance, I suppose ?”

“Of course. How can you ask such a question ?”

“Because I have been told that he was a perfect wild man of the woods before he inherited his fortune—couldn’t write his name, in fact, six weeks ago, and had never seen a sovereign in his life.”

“If you mean that he has not yet been presented at St. James’s, you are probably right,” replied the Earl, smiling.

“What, a pun, Lord Castletowers ? How shocking ! I did not believe you capable of such an enormity. But do pray tell me a little truth about your friend, for I daresay I have heard plenty of fiction. Was he not really a barbarian after all ?”

“No more than I am.”

“Is it possible ?”

“Nor is that all. Saxon Trefalden has plenty of solid learning under those yellow locks of his, Miss Hatherton. He speaks French, Italian, and German with equal facility; he is a first-rate mathematician; and as for his Greek and Latin scholarship, I have known nothing like it since I bade farewell to the dear old professors at Magdalen College.”

“Well, you surprise me very much,” said Miss Hatherton, “and I cannot deny that I’m disappointed. I had far rather he had been a barbarian, you know. It would have been so very delicious!”

“Perhaps, then, you will be consoled by finding him as unsophisticated as a child. But you shall judge for yourself.”

And with this, the Earl installed Miss Hatherton in an easy-chair, and went in search of Saxon. The heiress immediately turned to her nearest neighbour, who happened to be the Bishop of Betchworth, and began a conversation. It was Miss Hatherton’s way to be always talking—and somewhat loudly, too.

“What have I done, my lord,” said she, “that

you have scarcely spoken to me this evening? I have a thousand questions to ask you. I want to know how the renovations are going on; and if you are really to have a stained oriel, after all. And what are you going to do about that grand old carved screen? I have been told it is past repairing, and cannot possibly be put up again. I hope that's not true."

"I am happy to say that it is not," replied the bishop, who was a very handsome man, and much admired by the ladies of his diocese. "I believe we shall be able to restore the worst parts, and that it will keep its place for the next two or three centuries. About the east window I am less hopeful."

"Why so?" asked the heiress.

"I fear we cannot afford it."

"But how is that? I thought there was a large surplus fund in hand."

"There was; but we have found since then that the spire is in a much worse state than we had at first supposed; and to put it into thorough repair will swallow up the whole of our available money."

“Dear, dear, I’m so sorry!” said the heiress. “You really want the stained window. One misses the poetry of colour in Betchworth Cathedral. How much would it cost?”

“More than we could hope to raise after the liberal subscriptions already granted. A thousand pounds.”

“So large a sum? Ah, bishop, if I were one of your flock, I should ask leave to put that window in. However, if you like to open a fresh list, you may put me down for two hundred and fifty.”

“My dear lady,” said the prelate, “what can I say in acknowledgment of such munificence?”

“Only, I beg, that you will try to get the rest of the thousand as quickly as you can. But here comes my partner.”

And Miss Hatherton turned to Lord Castletowers, who had found and captured Saxon, and now stood with him beside her chair.

“Will you permit my friend Mr. Trefalden the honour of dancing with you, Miss Hatherton?” said he.

“I am delighted to make Mr. Trefalden’s

acquaintance, and shall be most happy to dance with him," replied the heiress, putting out her hand as cordially and unceremoniously as if Saxon were an old friend already. "What are they doing in the hall now, Lord Castletowers?"

"Finishing a waltz—which will be followed by a quadrille."

"Then we shall be just in time for the quadrille. Won't you find us a pleasant vis-à-vis?"

"Will you accept me, if I can find a partner?"

"Delightful! Bishop, we must have another moment's chat before the close of the evening."

Saying which, Miss Hatherton gathered her ample skirts together, took Saxon's proffered arm, and swept through the room and down the wide old stairs in a very stately fashion.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOSPITALLERS' GATE.

MR. KECKWITCH sat alone in a little private parlour at the back of the bar of the Hospitallers' Gate tavern, with a bottle of brown sherry and a couple of glasses before him, waiting patiently. It was the evening of the very day that his employer spent at Castletowers; but he had not, therefore, left Chancery Lane five minutes the sooner, nor neglected any detail of his regular work. He had, on the contrary, seen his fellow-clerks off the premises, and locked up the office with even more than his usual caution; for Abel Keckwitch was such a highly respectable man, that he would not on any account have taken advantage of Mr. Trefalden's absence. He was waiting, as he had just told the "young lady"

who presided at the bar in ringlets and pink ribbons, for a friend. It was about eight o'clock in the evening, and although the sky was as yet only grey with dusk, the gas was already lighted; for the Hospitalleers' Gate was a queer, old-fashioned, shut-in place, and the daylight always seemed to make a point of getting away from it as early as possible. There was, however, a bright fire burning in the grate; and the bar beyond was all alive with customers. The tops of the great yellow puncheons and the lacquered gas-burners were visible above the blind that veiled the half-glass door of the parlour; and now and then some privileged customer would peep over, stare at the back of Mr. Keckwitch's head, and disappear. But the clerk sat, all unconscious, gazing placidly at the fire, and never once looked round.

But for the brisk trade going on within the precincts of the Gate itself, the place would have been singularly quiet. The passers-by, just at this hour, were few. Sometimes a cab drove up, sometimes a cart rumbled past; but not often. The great stream of traffic flowed close

by, along a neighbouring thoroughfare, and was hoarsely audible, like the dull roar of a heavy sea ; but the Hospitallers' Gate stood apart, grey, and hoary, and stored with strange old memories, spanning the shabby by-street with its battlemented arch, and echoing, in a ghastly way, to the merriment below.

Standing in the very heart of the City, within a few yards of Smithfield-market and in the midst of the over-crowded parish of Clerkenwell, this rare old mediæval fragment was scarcely known even by name to the majority of Londoners. To the Smithfield drover, the student of Bartholomew's, the compositors of Tallis's press, and the watchmaking population in general, it was a familiar spot. Archæologists knew of its whereabouts, and held occasional meetings in the oak room over the gateway, where they talked learnedly of Jorden Briset, the patriarch Heraclius, Thomas Docwrey, Stow, and King Harry the Eighth ; and oftentimes moistened their dry discussions with rare old port from cellars that had once held good store of malmsey and sack for the pious knights' own drinking. Literary men

remembered it as the cradle of the "Gentleman's Magazine," and as the place where Samuel Johnson, in his rags and his pride, ate his dinner behind a screen, like a dog fed from his master's table. But these were pretty nearly all who knew or cared about the Hospitallers' Gate. Hundreds of intelligent Londoners passed within fifty yards of it every day of their lives, ignorant of its very existence. Of the dwellers to the west of Temple-bar not one in a thousand knew that scarcely a stone's throw from the Charter-house walls there yet stood some portion of a far more venerable religious foundation, begun in the last year of the eleventh century, and linked with many strange and stirring episodes of English history. Even so true a lover of the antique and picturesque as Leigh Hunt passed it by, in his pleasant memories of the town, without a word.

But Mr. Keckwitch was thinking neither of the good Knights Hospitallers, nor of Dr. Johnson, nor of anything nor any one just then, saving and excepting a certain Mr. Nicodemus Kidd, who had promised to meet him there about

eight o'clock that Thursday evening. And Mr. Kidd was late.

The clock in the bar had struck eight long ago. The clock of St. John's Church close by had struck a quarter past, and then half-past, and still Mr. Kidd was not forthcoming. The head clerk looked at his watch, sighed, shook his head, poured out a glass of the brown sherry, and drank it contemplatively. Before he had quite got to the end of it, a jovial voice in the bar and a noisy hand upon the latch of the glass door announced his friend's arrival.

Mr. Kidd came in—a tall, florid, good-humoured looking fellow, with a frank laugh, a loud, cheery voice, and a magnificent pair of red whiskers. The practised observer, noting his white hat, his showy watchguard, his free and easy bearing, would have pronounced him at first sight to be a commercial traveller; but the practised observer would for once have been wrong.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting, Mr. Keck-witch," said he, nodding familiarly to his entertainer, drawing a chair to the opposite side of the fire, and helping himself at once to a glass of

wine. "Not my fault, I assure you. Sherry, eh? Capital sherry, too. Don't know a better cellar in London, and that 's saying something."

"I'm very glad you have been able to look in, Mr. Kidd," said the head clerk, deferentially.

"I was particularly anxious to see you."

Mr. Kidd laughed, and helped himself to a second glass.

"It's one of the peculiarities of my profession, Mr. Keckwitch," said he, "that I find the world divided into two classes of people—those who are particularly anxious to see me, and those who are particularly anxious not to see me. Uncommon good sherry, and no mistake!"

Mr. Keckwitch glanced towards the glass door, edged his chair a little nearer to that of his guest, and said, huskily:—

"Have you had time, Mr. Kidd, to think over that little matter we were speaking about the other day?"

"That little matter?" repeated Mr. Kidd, in the same loud, off-hand way as before. "Oh, yes—I've not forgotten it."

He said this, filling his glass for the third

time, and holding it in a knowing fashion between his eye and the lamp. The head clerk again came an inch or two nearer, and, bending forward with his two fat hands upon his knees, ejaculated :—

“ Well ? ”

“ Well, Mr. Keckwitch ? ”

“ What is your opinion ? ”

Mr. Kidd tossed off the third glass, leaned back in his chair, and, with a smile of delightful candour, said :—

“ Well, sir, to be plain with you, I can give no opinion till you and I understand each other a little better.”

Mr. Keckwitch breathed hard.

“ What do you mean, Mr. Kidd ? ” said he.
“ Haven’t I made myself understood ? ”

Mr. Kidd pushed his glass away, thrust his hands into his pockets, and became suddenly grave and business-like.

“ Well, sir,” replied he, dropping his noisy voice and jovial smile as if they had been a domino and mask, “ this, you see, is an unusual case. It’s a sort of case we’re not accustomed to. We

don't go into things without a motive, and you've given us no motive to go upon."

The clerk's face darkened.

"Isn't it motive enough," said he, "that I want information, and am willing to pay for it?"

"Why, no, Mr. Keckwitch—not quite. We must be satisfied about the use you will make of that information."

"And supposin' I don't want to make use of it at all?"

"Then, sir, I'm afraid we can't help you. We are not spies; we are a legal force. Our business is to promote the ends of justice—not to serve private curiosity."

Mr. Keckwitch looked down, silent, baffled, perplexed.

"I should have thought," said he, "that the mere fact of any professional man keepin' his home and his ways so deadly secret, would be motive enough for inquiry. Where there's mystery, there's safe to be something wrong. People ain't so close when they've nothing to hide."

"Some folks are eccentric, you know, Mr. Keckwitch."

"It ain't eccentricity," replied the clerk, promptly.

"What then?"

"I can't say. I may have my suspicions; and my suspicions may be right, or may be wrong. Anyhow, one can't see far in the dark."

"No, that's true," replied Mr. Kidd.

"If it was no more than his address, I'd be satisfied," added Keckwitch, staring hard at the fire.

"Now, I tell you what it is, sir," said the other, "we must have *your* motive. Why do you want to know a certain person's address? What is it to you where he lives, or how he lives?"

"It is a great deal to me," replied Mr. Keckwitch. "I'm a respectable man, and I don't choose to work under any but a respectable employer."

Mr. Kidd nodded, and caressed the red whiskers.

"If, as I suspect, there's somethin' wrong

somewhere," the clerk went on to say, "I don't want to be mixed up in it when the day of reck'nin' comes round."

"Of course not."

"And there's *my* motive."

"Have you always been on good terms, Mr. Keckwitch, with the party in question?"

This was said very sharply and suddenly, but the clerk's face remained stolid and inexpressive as ever.

"Well, Mr. Kidd," said he, "I can't say there's ever been much love lost between us. I've done my duty, and I don't deny that he's done his; but we've been neither friends nor enemies."

Mr. Kidd stared hard at Mr. Keckwitch, and Mr. Keckwitch stared at the fire; the one all scrutiny, the other all unconsciousness. For some minutes both were silent, and the loud mirth at the bar became more distinctly audible. Then Mr. Kidd drew a deep breath, pushed his chair back with the air of one who arrives at a sudden resolution, drew a slip of paper from his waistcoat pocket, and said:—

“Well, sir, if the address is all you require—here it is.”

The steely light so rarely seen there, flashed into Abel Keckwitch's eyes, and his hand closed on the paper as if it had been a living thing trying to fly away. He did not even look at it, but imprisoned it at once in a plethoric pocket-book with a massive metal clasp that snapped like a handcuff.

“What's the fee?” said he, eagerly. “What's the fee for this little service, Mr. Kidd?”

“That's a question you must ask at headquarters, sir,” replied Mr. Kidd, eyeing the clerk somewhat curiously, and already moving towards the door.

“But you'll take another glass of sherry before you go?”

“Not a drop, sir, thank you—not a drop. Wish you good evening, sir.”

And in another moment, Mr. Kidd, with the white hat a trifle on one side, and the jovial smile seeming to irradiate his whole person, had presented himself at the bar, and was saying agreeable things to the young lady with the ringlets.

"Ah, sir," observed she, playfully, "I don't care for compliments."

"Then, my dear, a man must be dumb to please you; for if he has eyes and a tongue, what can he do but tell you you're an angel?"

The barmaid giggled, and bade the gallant stranger "get along!"

"It's a remarkable fact," said Mr. Kidd, "that the prettiest women are always the most hard-hearted. And it's an equally remarkable fact that the sight of beauty always makes me thirsty. I'll trouble you, Mary, my love, for a bottle of Schweppe."

"That's a good sort of fellow, I'll be bound!" ejaculated a stout woman, looking admiringly after Mr. Kidd, as he presently went out with an irresistible air of gentlemanly swagger.

"You think so, do you, ma'am?" said a seedy bystander. "Humph! That's Kidd, the detective."

CHAPTER VII.

ABOUT SWITZERLAND.

YOUR English matchmaker is, for the most part, a comfortable matron, plump, good-natured, kindly, with a turn for sentiment and diplomacy. She has, "The Etiquette of Courtship and Marriage" at her fingers' ends, and gives copies of that invaluable little manual to her young friends as soon as they are engaged. When the sermon is dull, she amuses herself by reading the solemnisation of matrimony. She delights in novels that have a great deal of love in them, and thinks Miss Bremer a finer writer than Mr. Thackeray. To patch up lovers' quarrels, to pave the way for a proposal, to propitiate reluctant guardians, are offices in which her very soul rejoices; and, like the death-bed hag in the *Bride of Lammermoor* who surveyed all her fellow creatures from a pro-

fessional point of view, seeing "a bonny corpse" in every fine young man about that country side, she beholds only bridegrooms and brides elect in the very children of her friends, when they come home for the holidays.

Lady Arabella Walkingshaw, was an enthusiastic matchmaker. She had married off her own daughters with brilliant success, and, being a real lover of the art of matrimony, delighted "to keep her hand in," among the young people of her acquaintance. What whist was to Mrs. Battle, matchmaking was to Lady Arabella Walkingshaw. "It was her business, her duty, what she came into the world to do." She went about it scientifically. She had abstruse theories with respect to eyes, complexions, ages, and Christian names; and even plunged into unknown physiological depths on the subject of races, genealogies, ties of consanguinity, and hereditary characteristics. In short, she constructed her model matches after a private ideal of her own. But hers was not altogether a sentimental, nor even a physiological, ideal. She was essentially a woman of the world; and took an interest quite

as deep, if not deeper, in the pairing of fortunes as of faces. To introduce an income of ten thousand a year to a dowry of fifty thousand pounds, and unite the two sums in the bonds (and settlements) of wedlock, was to Lady Arabella, an enterprise of surpassing interest. She would play for such a result as eagerly and passionately as if her own happiness depended on the cards, and the stakes were for her own winning.

With such a hobby kept perpetually saddled in the chambers of her imagination, it was not surprising that the sight of Saxon Trefalden leading Miss Hatherton down to dance should have sufficed to send Lady Arabella off at a canter.

“What a charming match that would be!” said she to Mrs. Bunyon. Mrs. Bunyon was the wife of the handsome Bishop, tall, aristocratic-looking, and many years his junior. Both ladies were standing near their hostess, and she was still welcoming the coming guest.

“Do you think so?” said Mrs. Bunyon, doubtfully. “I don’t see why.”

“My dear Mrs. Bunyon—two such splendid fortunes !”

“The less reason that either should marry for money,” replied the Bishop’s wife. “Besides, look at the difference of age !”

“Not more than five years,” said Lady Arabella.

“But it would be five years on the wrong side. What do you say, Lady Castletowers—would they make a desirable couple ?”

“I did not hear the names,” replied Lady Castletowers, with one of her most gracious smiles.

“We were speaking,” said the matchmaker, “of Miss Hatherton and Mr. Trefalden.”

The smile vanished from Lady Castletowers’ lip.

“I should think it a most injudicious connexion,” she said, coldly. “Mr. Trefalden is a mere boy, and has no position beyond that given to him by the accident of wealth.”

“But wealth *is* position,” said Lady Arabella, defending her ground inch by inch, and thinking, perhaps, of her own marriage.

“Miss Hatherton has fortune, and may therefore aspire to more than fortune in her matrimonial choice,” replied the Countess, with a slightly heightened colour, and dropped the conversation.

Mrs. Bunyon and Lady Arabella exchanged glances and a covert smile. Moving on presently with the stream, they passed out of Lady Castletowers’ hearing, and returned to the subject.

“Their united fortunes,” pursued Lady Arabella, “would amount to five millions, if not more. Only conceive it—FIVE MILLIONS!”

“You will meet with no sympathy from Lady Castletowers,” said the Bishop’s wife, significantly.

“Evidently not. Though, if there were really a coronet in prospect”

“I think there *is* a coronet in prospect,” said Mrs. Bunyon.

Lady Arabella shook her head.

“No more than there is a crown matrimonial,” said she. “I am a close observer of young people, and I know quite well what direction the Earl’s inclinations take.”

“Indeed !”

“He is over head and ears in love with Mademoiselle Colonna,” said Lady Arabella, confidentially. “And has been, for years.”

“Does Lady Castletowers know it ?”

“I think not.”

“And do you suppose they are secretly engaged ?”

“Oh, dear, no. Mademoiselle Colonna, I believe, discourages his attentions—greatly to her credit.”

“It is a marriage that would be highly distasteful to Lady Castletowers,” observed Mrs. Bunyon.

“It would break her heart,” said Lady Arabella.

“She is ambitious.”

“—and poor. Poor as a mouse.”

If Lady Castletowers had not been a Countess, a Holme Pierrepont, and the daughter of an Earl, Lady Arabella Walkingshaw could scarcely have forgiven her this fact. She was one of that large majority who regard poverty as a crime.

In the meanwhile, Miss Hatherton had found

that Saxon could not only dance, but, when the first shyness of introduction had worn off, could actually talk as well. So she set herself to draw him out, and his naïveté amused her excessively.

“I don’t mean to let you hand me to a seat and get rid of me, Mr. Trefalden,” said she, when the quadrille was over, and the dancers were promenading up and down the hall. “You must sit down in this quiet little nook, and talk to me. I want you to tell me ever so much more about Switzerland.”

“I am glad to find anyone who cares to hear about it,” said Saxon. “It is a subject of which I am never weary.”

“I dare say not. I only wonder how you can endure this life of tinsel and glitter after the liberty of the mountains. Are you not disgusted with the insincere smiles, and polite falsehoods of society?”

Saxon looked at her with dismay.

“What do you mean?” said he. “The world here has been very kind to me. I never dreamt that its smiles were false, or its kindnesses insincere.”

Miss Hatherton laughed.

"You'll find it out," said she, "when you've lived in it a little longer."

"I hope not. I should be very unhappy if I thought so."

"Well, then, don't think so. Enjoy your illusions as long as you can. I have outlived mine long ago; and I'm sorry for it. But let us talk of something pleasanter—of Switzerland. Have you ever hunted the chamois?"

"Hundreds of times."

"How charming! High up, I suppose, among the snows?"

"Among the snows, along the edges of precipices, across the glaciers—wherever the chamois could spring, or the foot of the hunter follow," replied Saxon, with enthusiasm.

"That's really dangerous sport, is it not?" asked the heiress.

"It is less dangerous, of course, to the practised mountaineer than to one who is new to the work. But there can be no real sport without danger."

"Why so?"

“ Because sport without danger is mere slaughter. The risks ought never to be all on the side of a helpless beast.”

“ That is just and generous,” said Miss Hather-ton, warmly.

Saxon blushed, and looked uncomfortable.

“ I have not only been over a glacier, but down a crevasse, after a chamois, many a time,” said he, hurriedly. “ I shot one this very spring, as he stood upon an ice-ridge, between two chasms. I ought not to have done it. I ought to have waited till he got to a more open spot ; but, having him well within range, I brought him down. When I reached the spot, however, there was my chamois wedged half way down a deep, blue, cruel-looking crevasse—and I had no alternative but to get him out, or leave him.”

“ So you cut steps in the ice, as one sees in the pictures in the Alpine Club books ! ”

“ No—I simply tied the cord that every mountaineer carries, round the stock of my rifle—fixed the gun firmly across the mouth of the chasm—and let myself down. Then I tied another cord round my chamois, and when I had reached the

top again, I drew him up after me. Nothing is easier. A child can do it, if he is used to the ice, and is not afraid. In all glacier work, it is only the rash and the timid who are in danger."

"And what other sport do you get?" asked Miss Hatherton. "Are there any eagles about the mountains of the Grisons?"

"Not so many as there used to be. I have not shot more than five or six within these last three years; but I robbed many an eagle's nest when I was a boy. Then, you know, we have the steinbok, and in winter the wolf; and sometimes we get the chance of a brown bear."

"Have you ever shot a bear, Mr. Trefalden?" said Miss Hatherton, intensely interested.

"I have shot two," replied Saxon, with a flush of boyish pride, "and made sledge-rugs of their skins. You have never been in Switzerland?"

"Oh yes, I have," replied Miss Hatherton; "but only in the beaten tracks, and under the custody of a courier, like a maniac with a keeper."

"Ah, you really know nothing of the country,"

said Saxon. "Neither of the country nor the people. The Switzerland that the Swiss loves, is that wild, free, upper region where there are neither roads nor hotels, tourists nor guides, but only dark pine forests and open plateaus, the haunt of the marmot, the ptarmigan, and the chamois."

"I never saw but one chamois," said Miss Hatherton, "and that was a poor fat melancholy creature in a cage."

"Of course you never visited Switzerland in the winter?"

"Oh dear, no."

"And yet that is the most glorious time of all, when the plateaus are all sheeted with snow, and the great peaks rise above them like marble obelisks, and even the pines stand out white against the deep-blue sky. It is like a world awaiting the creation of colour."

"What an enthusiast you are," laughed Miss Hatherton.

"I love my country," replied Saxon.

"You need not tell me that. But what can you do in winter, snowed up in those wild valleys?"

“We are not snowed up. We have sledges; and the deeper the snow lies on the roads and passes, the better our sledges fly along. You should see the Rheinthal between Chur and Thusis, on a bright day in the depth of winter, when the sledges flash along in the sunshine, and the air is full of the music of the bells.”

“How delightful!”

“Indeed it is delightful. Then we also skate, practise with the rifle, carve wooden toys, and attend to the winter work of our farms; and sometimes, if there is a wolf or a wild boar about the neighbourhood, we have a great hunt by torchlight. Winter is the time for Switzerland! Ask any Swiss who is not a townsman, and he will tell you the same story.”

“I suppose you mean to go back there some day?” said Miss Hatherton.

“Go back!” echoed Saxon. “Why, of course I do. It is my own country—my home!”

“Then if I were to come some Christmas to Chur, would you be very kind to me, and show me some of these winter sports?”

“That I would!” exclaimed Saxon. “And

I would buy the loveliest Canadian sledge for you that money could purchase; and you should see a boar hunt by torchlight; and a *Schützen Fest*; and a wrestling match; and I would find you a young marmot for a pet. Above all, you would know my dearest father, and if you loved Switzerland for no other reason, you would love it for his sake."

"Your father?" said Miss Hatherton. "I had no idea your father was living."

"He is my uncle," replied the young man; "but my father by adoption. He is a Lutheran pastor—a miracle of erudition; but as simple as a child, and as pious as an apostle."

"I hear you are terribly learned yourself, Mr. Trefalden," said Miss Hatherton, rising abruptly. "But what is this they are going to do—a waltz? Do you waltz?"

"Try me," replied Saxon, merrily. "It is our national dance—the only dance I ever knew, till I learned these hideous quadrilles a few weeks ago."

In another moment he had encircled the heiress's waist with his arm, and was flying

round the hall with her in those smooth, swift circles which no dancers, however good, can execute like the Germans and Swiss. Miss Hatherton was delighted ; for she valued a good partner above all things, and Saxon was the best waltzer in the room.

She would willingly have danced and talked with him all the rest of the evening ; for Miss Hatherton liked to be amused, and cared very little for the remarks of lookers-on ; while Saxon, pleased with her blunt cordiality, would with equal readiness have gone on waltzing, and praising a Swiss life, till it was time to hand her to her carriage. But this was not to be. Lady Castletowers, who, in her quality of hostess, always knew what her guests were doing, was by no means disposed to permit any such proceeding : so she despatched her son to dance with the heiress, and, having sent for Saxon, herself handed him over to Miss Colonna for the next quadrille.

By this time the arrivals were over, and the departures had begun ; and after supper was served, the rooms cleared rapidly. By two o'clock,

all were gone, save those guests who remained for the night, and of these there were about a dozen.

Then Viscount and Lady Esher, who had brought valet and maid in their suite, retired to the stately apartments prepared for their reception; and the young men all went down to [the Earl's smoking-room; and the Colonnas, instead of going to bed like the rest of the guests, repaired to the little study in the turret. They had much to talk over. Mr. Thompson, the liberal member, had brought them information of Garibaldi, and a packet of letters from friends in London and Turin; Miss Hatherton and Mr. Walkingshaw had promised contributions to the funds; and Mrs. Bunyon had undertaken to distribute some addresses, and fill up a card, among her friends. With the Eshers and Lord Boxhill there was, of course, nothing to be done. Like Lady Castletowers, they looked upon liberty as a vulgar institution; and upon patriots in general as doubtful characters.

The letters read, and such entries made as were necessary, the father and daughter rose to say good night.

“ You have done nothing yet, Olimpia,” said the Italian. “ Here is the fourth day already gone.”

“ I know it.”

“ I have talked with him once or twice about our country’s cause, and he listens willingly ; but I have purposely abstained from doing more. The work is yours—why do you delay it ? ”

“ I will not delay it longer,” replied Olimpia, impatiently ; “ I will begin it to-day.”

“ He is so rich,” said Colonna, “ and Italy so poor ; and every letter we receive is a prayer for help ! ”

“ You need not urge me. Have I not said to day?—and see, the grey is already in the sky ! ”

She bade him good night abruptly, and went along the silent corridors to her own room far away. But the grey had paled to white, and the white had turned to sunlight, before she took the flowers from her hair, or the bracelets from her arms, or even seemed to remember that it would be well to seek an hour or two of sleep. What wonder, then, that when at last

she threw herself, half dressed, upon the bed, her eyes looked worn and hollow, and her cheek scarcely less white than the pillow against which it was laid ?

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW SAXON IMPROVED THE WEATHERCOCK AT CASTLETOWERS.

“WHAT the deuce can we do to amuse all these people ? ” said Lord Castletowers to Major Vaughan, as they met on the stairs before breakfast, the morning after the party. “The Eshers, I know, go early, and my mother will take care of the ladies ; but here are six or eight men in the house, none of whom are likely to leave before night. What is to be done ? ”

“Billiards ? ”

“Well enough for an hour or two ; but *après ?* ”

“We might ride over to Guildford, and beat up the quarters of those Forty-second men who were here last night.”

“Impossible. There are only five riding-horses

in the stables, including yours and Trefalden's; and I haven't even got guns enough to take them out shooting, if there were anything to shoot, except rooks—which there isn't!" said the Earl, in desperation.

"Then I don't know what we can do, unless we put on the gloves; but here comes the Arcadian, perhaps he can suggest something."

The Arcadian meant Saxon. It was a sou-briquet that had befallen him of late, no one knew how. The difficulty was no sooner explained to him, than he proposed a way out of it.

"Let us organise a *Volksfest* in the Swiss fashion," said he. "We can shoot at a mark, leap, run foot races, and invite the ladies to award the prizes."

"A famous idea!" exclaimed the Earl. "The very thing for a bright cool day like this."

"We must choose a space of level sward to begin with," said the major, "and improvise a grand stand for the ladies."

"And elect an umpire," said Saxon.

"And look up some prizes," added the Earl.

“ I will give that bronze cup in the library—it is an antique from Pompeii.”

“ And I, my inlaid pistols,” said Saxon.

“ And I . . . bah, I am such a poor devil,” said Vaughan. “ I possess nothing of any value—except my sword and my horse.”

“ The best riches of a soldier, Major Vaughan,” said Mademoiselle Colonna. “ But may I ask why this parliament is being held upon the stairs? ”

She had just come, unheard, along the carpeted corridor, and stood waiting a few steps higher than the trio in consultation. She wore a delicate grey dress of some soft material trimmed with black velvet, and a little linen collar fastened at the throat by a circular brooch of Roman gold. Behind her, fell the folds of a crimson curtain; whilst, through the uppermost roses of a huge Gothic window that reached from nearly the top to the bottom of the great oak staircase, a stream of vivid sunshine poured down upon her head, so that she stood in the midst of it, in her pale, proud beauty, as if enclosed in a pillar of light.

The three men looked up, dazzled, almost

breathless, as if in presence of some glorified apparition ; and for a moment none replied.

Mademoiselle Colonna, divining, perhaps, with her fine womanly instinct, the spell by which they were bound, moved a step lower, out of the sunshine, and said :—

“All silent? Nay, then, I fear it is not a parliament, but a plot.”

“It is a plot, signora,” replied Vaughan. “We are planning some out-of-door sports for this afternoon’s entertainment. Will you be our Queen of Beauty, and graciously condescend to distribute the prizes?”

The Earl coloured up, and bit his lip impatiently.

“Vaughan’s promptitude,” said he, “bears hardly upon those whose wit, or audacity, is less ready at command. I had myself intended to solicit this grace at Miss Colonna’s hands.”

“The race, my dear fellow, is to the swift, and the battle to the strong, in the affairs of life,” replied Vaughan, carelessly. “But what says our sovereign lady?”

“That she dares not pledge her royal word too

hastily. Mine, you know, is not an honorary secretaryship; and I know not what work this morning's post may bring for my pen. Besides, I must hear what arrangements Lady Castletowers may have in contemplation."

"I don't think my mother will make any that shall deprive us of the light of her countenance on such an important occasion," said the Earl. "But there goes the gong. We must adjourn this debate till after breakfast."

Lady Castletowers was pleased to approve her son's scheme, and promised not only to honour the ground with her presence at half-past two o'clock, but to bring with her two young ladies who had slept at the house and were to have been driven home early in the morning. These were the daughters of a poor clergyman who lived about twelve miles off, and, being very young and timid, looked up to the stately Countess as though she were the queen of heaven. Miss Colonna, being urged thereto by Lady Castletowers herself, was induced to accept the royal office; and, although Viscount and Lady Esher were, of course, too magnificent to alter their plans, and drove

away behind their four horses shortly after breakfast, the patronage of the little fête promised to be quite brilliant enough to stimulate the ambition of the candidates.

It was a happy thought, and gave ample occupation to everybody concerned. There were six young men that day at Castletowers besides Sir Charles Burgoyne, Major Vaughan, and Saxon Trefalden, who were permanent guests. These six were the Hon. Pelham Hay, of Baliol College, Oxford; the Hon. Edward Brandon; Lieutenant Frank Torrington, of the Fourth Lancers; Mr. Guy Greville, of the Perquisite-office; and two brothers named Sydney and Robert Pulteney, belonging, as yet, to no place or profession whatever. There was not "the making" of one really prominent man among the whole half-dozen. There was not, perhaps, one more than commonly clever man; but they were, for all that, a by no means indifferent specimen lot of the stuff of which English gentlemen are made. They were all of patrician blood—all honourable, good-natured, good-looking, manly young fellows, who had been brought

up to ride, to speak the truth, and respect the game-laws. They dressed perfectly, and tied their cravats to admiration. They spoke that conventional dialect which passes for good English in good society, and expressed themselves with that epigrammatic neatness that almost sounds like wit, and comes naturally to men who have been educated at a great university and finished in a crack regiment, a government office, or a Pall-Mall club. And they were all dancing men, and nearly all members of the Erectheum. Of the whole set the Hon. Edward Brandon was the most indifferent specimen of the genus homo; yet even he, though short enough of brain, did not want for breeding, and, however poorly off for muscle, had as much "pluck" as many a better man.

The whole breakfast party hailed the scheme with enthusiasm, and even Signor Colonna said he would go down to see the running. Prizes were freely subscribed over the breakfast-table. Lady Castletowers promised a curious yataghan that had belonged to Lord Byron, and been given to her late husband by a member of the poet's

family ; Signor Colonna offered an Elzevir Horace, with the autograph of Filicaja on the title page ; and the competitors united in making up a purse of twenty guineas, to be run for in a one-mile race, and handed over by the winner to Miss Colonna for the Italian fund. As for the young men, they despatched their breakfasts with the rapidity of schoolboys on a holiday morning, and were soon hard at work upon the necessary preparations.

To choose and measure a smooth amphitheatre of sward about half a mile from the house, set up a winning-post for the racers, a target for the marksmen, and a temporary grand stand for the spectators, was work enough for more than the four hours and a-half that lay between ten and half-past two ; but these amateur workmen, assisted by the village carpenter and his men, as well as by all the grooms, gardeners, and odd helps that could be got together, worked with so good a will that the ground was ready a full hour and three-quarters before the time. The grand stand alone was a triumph of ingenuity. It consisted of a substratum of kitchen tables securely

lashed together, on which were placed a carpet and some chairs, the whole structure being surmounted by a canopy formed of a rick cloth suspended to a tree and a couple of tall stakes.

Having gone once over the course at a "sling-trot," just to try the ground, the young men returned to the house at one o'clock, furiously hungry, and in tremendous spirits.

Castletowers had ordered luncheon to be prepared for them in the smoking-room, and there, laughing, talking, eating, and drinking all at once, they made out the programme of the games.

"What shall we begin with?" said the Earl, pencil in hand. "We must end, of course, with the one-mile race, and I think we ought to take the rifle work first, before running has made our hands less steady."

"Of course. Rifles first, by all means," replied three or four voices together.

"Names, then, if you please. Now, gentlemen, who goes in for the bronze cup at eight hundred yards?"

"On what conditions?" asked one of the lunchers.

“The usual conditions. Five shots each, at eight hundred yards ; ordinary Enfield rifle ; Wimbledon scoring, that is to say, outer, two ; centre, three ; bull’s-eye, four.”

“Eight hundred’s rather long practice for outsiders,” said another man, immersed at the moment in chicken-pie.

“If we had small bores, I should put it down at a thousand,” replied the Earl ; “but there’s only one in the house.”

The man in the pie was heard to mutter something unintelligible about the abundance of great bores ; but being instantly choked by his nearest neighbour, relapsed into moody silence. In the meanwhile the Earl continued to canvass for competitors.

“Come,” said he, “this will never do. I have only three names yet—Burgoyne, Torrington, and Vaughan. Whom else ? I can’t enter myself for my own prize, and I must have three more names.”

“You may put me down, if you like,” said Mr. Guy Greville. “I shall be sure to shoot somebody ; but it don’t signify.”

“And me,” added Pelham Hay.

"Thanks. Burgoyne, Torrington, Vaughan, Greville, Pelham Hay—five won't do. I want six at least. Come, gentlemen, who will stand for number six?"

"Why, Trefalden, of course!" exclaimed Vaughan. "The Swiss are born *tirailleurs*. Put his name down."

"No, no," said Saxon, hastily. "Not this time."

"But, my dear fellow, you are *de la première force*, are you not?" asked Castletowers.

"I used to shoot well enough, when I was in practice," said Saxon, with some embarrassment; "but I'd rather not compete now."

The Earl looked surprised, but was too well bred to insist.

"If you won't," said he, "I must find some one who will. Syd. Pulteney, I shall enter you for my sixth shot, and that settles match number one. Gentlemen, the secretary waits to enter names for the second rifle match, the prize for which will consist of a magnificent pair of elaborately ornamented pistols, generously offered by an honourable competitor who declines to compete. I do not mention the honourable competi-

tor's name, because he is a modest young man, and given to blushing. Now, gentlemen, you will please to remember that this is a solemn occasion, and that the eyes of Europe are upon you!"

And so, rattling on in the gaiety of good spirits, the Earl enrolled the second party. Next in order came the long jump of eighteen feet, for Signor Colonna's Elzevir Horace; then the race of one hundred yards, for Lady Castletowers' prize; and last of all, the one-mile race for the twenty-guinea purse, dignified by the name of "the Italian Cup," and entered for by the whole of the athletes.

When the programme was fairly made out, Castletowers called Saxon aside, and, taking him familiarly by the arm, led him into the billiard-room adjoining.

"Trefalden," said he, "may I ask you a question?"

"Twenty, if you like," replied Saxon.

"No—one will do, if you answer it honestly. Why don't you put in a shot at either of the rifle-matches?"

Saxon looked embarrassed.

"I'd rather not," he said, after a momentary pause.

"But why? You must be a good marksman."

Saxon made no reply.

"To tell you the truth," said the Earl, "I'm disappointed. I had looked to you for a display of skill, and expected something brilliant. I think you should have gone into the field, if only to maintain the honour of the Swiss rifles."

Saxon laughed good-temperedly.

"Do you really want your question answered?" said he.

"Of course."

"Then wait a minute while I fetch my gun."

He ran out of the room, and presently re-appeared outside the window, rifle in hand.

"Look there," he said, pointing to the roof of the stables. "Do you see that weathercock?"

It was a gilt cock, like that which Goëthe used to admire, as a child, on the Ober Main Thor at Frankfort; and was just then shifting with the breeze, and flashing in the sunshine like a yellow diamond. The Earl threw up the window and leaned out.

"I should think so," he replied. "I have seen it pretty nearly every day of my life, ever since I was born."

"How far off is it, do you think?"

"Well, I hardly know; perhaps six hundred yards. But you can't hit a thing that blazes like a comet, and is never still for two seconds together."

"It's an ugly bird," said Saxon, bringing his gun to his shoulder. "Don't you think he'd look more intelligent if he had an eye in his head?"

The words were no sooner out of his lips than he fired. Lord Castletowers snatched up his hat, and bounded down upon the sward.

"You haven't done it?" he exclaimed. "It's impossible!"

"Let us go and see."

They had to go round by the front of the house and across the yards, to reach those outbuildings over which the vane was placed. When they had gone about two-thirds of the distance, the Earl suddenly stood still.

There was a small round hole drilled through

precisely that part of the cock's head where his eye ought to have been.

At the sight of his friend's dumb amazement, Saxon roared with laughter, like a young giant.

"There," said he, "I told you it would be an improvement. And now you see why I wouldn't compete for the cup. We Swiss are always shooting, from the time we are old enough to carry a gun; and I didn't want to spoil the sport for the others. It wouldn't have been fair."

CHAPTER IX.

THE RIFLE MATCH.

AT half-past two an open carriage drove up to the ground, and four ladies alighted. They were received by Lord Castletowers, handed to their seats, and presented with written programmes of the games. Miss Colonna was installed in the central arm-chair, which, being placed a little in advance of the other seats, and dignified with a foot-stool, was styled, somewhat magniloquently, the Throne. Scarcely had they taken their places when two more carriages appeared upon the scene, the first of which contained Lady Arabella Walkingshaw and Miss Hatherton, and the second, Mrs. Cadogan, the wife of the Sedgebrook vicar, and her two daughters. The latter, hearing down in the village what was doing in the park, had come over to see the sports ; but Lady Arabella's

visit was made in exclusive pursuance of her own little game, and bore no kind of reference to any that might be set on foot by other people. She was, therefore, rather put out than otherwise when, instead of finding Lady Castletowers at home, she was informed that "my lady was gone across the park to see the gentlemen race, and had left word, if any friends called at the house, that there would be seats for them, if they liked to follow." Miss Hatherton, however, was delighted.

"It's perfectly charming," said she, as they turned down the drive leading to that part of the park indicated by the servant. "You cannot think how pleased I am, Lady Arabella!"

"Well, my dear, then I am pleased too," replied Lady Arabella, benevolently.

"There's nothing I enjoy so much as contests of this kind," Miss Hatherton went on to say. "Boat-races, horse-races, reviews, anything, so long as skill, strength, or speed is in question. Why, I haven't missed a Derby-day for the last five years; and as for the Roman Carnival, the only thing I care for in it is the horse-race. I'm

always sorry the Jews don't run instead. It would be so much more amusing."

"You droll creature," said Lady Arabella, with a faint smile. "I wonder if Mr. Trefalden will take part in these games?"

"Of course he will—and win all before him. He's as fleet as a chamois, depend on it."

"I hope they won't fire," said Lady Arabella, with a little lady-like shudder.

"And I hope, above all things, that they will. But then, you know, dear Lady Arabella, I have no nerves. Why, this is delightful—there's quite a crowd!"

And so there was. News is contagious, and propagates itself as mysteriously as the potato disease. The whole neighbourhood had already heard of what was doing at the park; and every farmer, gamekeeper, and idle fellow about the place, was on the ground long before the hour appointed. As for the women and children, nothing short of polygamy could account for their numbers.

"Lady Arabella Walkingshaw and Miss Hatherton!" said Lord Castletowers, hastening to the

carriage-door as they drove up. "This is indeed a happy accident. You have been to the house, I suppose, to call upon my mother?"

"We have; but with no idea that we were coming to a—a fête of this kind," replied Lady Arabella, somewhat at a loss for the most appropriate word, and exchanging bows and gracious smiles with the ladies on the platform.

"Why did you not tell us about it last evening, you sly man?" asked Miss Hatherton.

"Because I then knew no more about it than yourself, fair lady," replied the Earl. "It is an improvisation."

"And what are you going to do?"

"A little of everything—rifle-shooting, leaping, running; but you shall have a programme presently; and if you will alight, I can give you seats beside my mother."

With this he gave his arm to Lady Arabella, and conducted both ladies to the place of honour.

"But where are the competitors?" said Miss Hatherton, when due greetings had been exchanged, and they had taken their seats; "and above all, where's my friend the noble savage?"

"Trefalden? Oh, he's in our tent out yonder. This affair was his idea entirely,"

"And an admirable idea, too. But he'll beat you, you know."

"He would, if he came forward," replied the Earl; "but he declines to compete."

"Declines to compete!" echoed the heiress.

"Yes—for everything except the last race—and that we all go in for."

"I never heard of such a thing!" exclaimed Miss Hatherton, indignantly. "Why, it's as if the favourite was withdrawn at the last moment from the Derby—and I, too, who had intended to back him to any extent! I declare I was never more disappointed in my life. What's his motive?"

"He said he was out of practice," replied Castletowers, hesitatingly.

"Nonsense. That wasn't his real motive. He knew nobody else would have a chance, and he was too generous to carry off all the honours."

"Do you really think so?" said Miss Colonna, suddenly. She had listened to the conversation till now, without taking part in it.

"I do indeed. What does Lord Castletowers say?"

"I say that Miss Hatherton is right; and I *know* her to be right. Trefalden could write his name in bullets on that target, if he chose—but he won't."

Miss Hatherton turned to Miss Colonna in a glow of enthusiasm.

"That's true nobleness!" she exclaimed.

"Indeed it is," said Castletowers. "He's the finest fellow I have ever known, savage or civilised."

But Miss Colonna said nothing.

"I wish you'd bring him this way, Lord Castletowers," said the heiress. "I like talking with him—he amuses me immensely."

"You shall have him by-and-by," laughed the Earl; "but he is our umpire in the rifle matches, and can't be spared at present. Excuse me—another carriage full of ladies. I am master of the ceremonies."

And with this he ran off to receive the Cadogans.

And now the appointed hour being not only come, but overpast, the ladies expectant, and the

audience considerable, it was decided that they should begin.

Lord Castletowers was seen to cross the ground, and enter the cricketing tent at the farther end, whence he presently emerged with his pouch belted on, and his rifle in his hand. He was followed by five others, similarly equipped; and by Saxon Trefalden who, in his quality as judge, took up a safe position to the right of the target. Miss Hatherton surveyed them through her glass as they came over the ground, and placed themselves about a dozen yards off, with their backs to the stand.

"Dear me! they are very near us," said Lady Arabella, with that sort of pretty timidity that is less charming at eight-and-forty than at eighteen. "I hope it is not dangerous."

"Don't be alarmed, my dear friend," said Miss Hatherton. "Gentlemen don't generally fire behind their own backs. So, Major Vaughan begins—and a very good shot, too—very near the centre. Who is that remarkably handsome fair man to the right?"

The question was addressed to Miss Colonna;

but it received no reply. Olimpia heard the words, as she heard the report of the first rifle, without attaching any import to the sound—just as her eyes were fixed upon the target, but saw nothing. She was absorbed in thought—very painful thought, as it would seem, by the strange hard way in which her lips were drawn together, and her fingers were mechanically twisting and tearing the programme which they held.

Miss Hatherton turned to repeat the inquiry ; but, seeing the expression on Olimpia's face, remained silent. It was an expression that startled her, and puzzled her as much as it startled her. An expression such as one sees but seldom in the course of an ordinary life ; neither wholly resolute, nor hopeless, nor defiant ; but a blending, perhaps, of all three, with something else that might have been compunction—or despair.

Curiosity so far prevailed, that for some three or four seconds Miss Hatherton continued to stare at Olimpia instead of watching the competitors, and thus, to her infinite mortification, lost the thread of the firing. Of course, none of

the ladies on the platform could help her. They saw the riflemen, and they saw the marks on the target ; but not one among them had the dimmest idea of the order in which those hits had been made, or of the hands that had delivered them. The appointed number of rounds, however, having been completed, the question was set at rest by the announcement that Sir Charles Burgoyne had carried off the first prize. Sir Charles Burgoyne sauntered up accordingly to the front of the platform, and received the cup from Miss Colonna's hand with the best-bred air of indifference in the world.

"You don't share my passion for these contests, Miss Colonna," said the heiress, in the pause that ensued between the first and second match. The strange look had vanished from Olimpia's face long since ; but Miss Hatherton could not forget it—would have given something to fathom it, if possible.

"Indeed you mistake. I think them very interesting," replied Olimpia.

"But of course they cannot have so much interest for you as for me. Your sympathies are

bound up in a great cause, and you must have fewer small emotions on hand."

"Perhaps," said Olimpia, with a forced smile.

"No bad news from Italy, I hope?"

"The news at present," replied Olimpia, "is neither bad nor good. It is a season of anxious suspense for all whose hearts are in the cause."

"You look anxious," said Miss Hatherton kindly, but inquisitively. "I thought just now I never saw a face look so anxious as yours. You didn't seem to remark the firing at all."

A crimson tide rushed to Olimpia's face, flooded it, and ebbed away, leaving her paler than before.

"I am quite strong enough," she replied, coldly, "to sustain such cares as fall to my lot."

The competitors for the second rifle match were now on the ground, and the conversation dropped. There were but four this time—Lord Castletowers, Sir Charles Burgoyne, Major Vaughan, and Lieutenant Torrington. Having five shots each, they fired alternately, one shot at a time, in their order as they stood—Vaughan first, Torrington second,

Castletowers third, and Burgoyne fourth. It became evident, after the first two rounds, that Vaughan, although a good marksman, was inferior to both Castletowers and Burgoyne, and that Torrington was nowhere. Miss Hatherton and Miss Colonna were the only two ladies who could follow the shots, or understand the scoring; and this they did with a degree of interest quite incomprehensible to the rest. As the end drew near, and it became evident that the victory lay between Burgoyne and the Earl, Miss Hatherton's excitement knew no bounds.

"Ten to one on Lord Castletowers," she exclaimed. "See how cool he is! See how steadily he brings up his gun! Ten to one—gloves or guineas. . . Will nobody take me? In the bull's-eye, I vow! Beat that, Sir Charles, if you can!"

"He will *not* beat it," said Olympia, in a low, earnest voice.

Miss Hatherton glanced at her, again; but scarcely for a second. She was too deeply interested in the next shot to care much about anything else just then. But she saw Olympia's

parted lips, and the outlooking light in her eyes, and thought of both afterwards.

Up to this point, Lord Castletowers had made three bull's-eyes and two centres, scoring a total of eighteen. Sir Charles had made two bull's-eyes and two centres, scoring a total of fourteen. The next shot would be his fifth and last. If he hit the bull's-eye it would be a tie between Castletowers and himself, and they would have to fire again to decide the victory ; but if he scored less than four, the Earl must win.

There was a moment of intense suspense. Sir Charles brought up his gun very slowly, took aim twice before he fired, and delivered an excellent shot just *outside* the line dividing the bull's-eye from the centre. He had lost by the sixteenth of an inch.

The spectators round the ropes set up a faint respectful shout in their squire's honour ; the non-competitors rushed up to the target in an excited way ; and Saxon, too well pleased to care for the moment whether Burgoyne heard him or not, shook his friend by both hands, exclaiming :—

“ I am so glad, Castletowers—so heartily glad !
I did wish you to win those pistols ! ”

Miss Colonna's smile was cold and indifferent enough when the Earl presented himself to receive his prize ; but her hand trembled, and Miss Hatherton's sharp eyes saw it.

CHAPTER X.

HOW A FAIR LADY GAVE HER TRUE KNIGHT A GUERDON.

THE long jump was jumped, and the hundred yards race was run—Mr. Guy Greville winning the first by four inches, and Major Vaughan the second by four yards; and only the great race remained to be contested. In the meanwhile, half an hour was allowed for rest and refreshments. The gentlemen thronged to the platform in a mongrel costume, made up of flannel trousers, parti-coloured Jerseys, and overcoats of various descriptions; so that they looked like cricketing men below and boating men above. Servants glided solemnly about with Madeira and biscuits. The ladies congratulated the victors, and the victors congratulated each other. The spectators outside the ropes strolled about re-

spectfully, and did a little subdued betting among themselves ; and the conversation on the platform was broken up into coteries. One of these consisted of Lady Arabella Walkingshaw, Lady Castletowers, and her son.

“Vaughan ran well, didn’t he ?” said the Earl. “I thought at one moment that Greville would have out-paced him ; but Vaughan had better wind, and steady did it.”

“You would do well, Gervase, to reserve your sporting phraseology for your male friends,” said Lady Castletowers, coldly. “You forget that ladies do not appreciate its full point and vigour.”

“I beg your pardon, my dear mother ; but it comes so naturally when sport is the topic of conversation,” replied her son. “I hope you are amused, Lady Arabella ?”

“Oh yes, thank you—when you don’t fire.”

“There is, at all events, nothing undignified in firing,” observed the Countess.

“I hope you do not think our athletic games undignified, mother ?” said the Earl.

“For gentlemen, certainly. For boys, or peasants, not at all.”

"But a gentleman has as many and as good muscles as a peasant. A gentleman values strength and speed as much, and sometimes more, than he values Greek and Latin; but like Greek and Latin, strength and speed must be kept up by frequent practice."

"I have no wish to argue the question," said Lady Castletowers. "It is enough that I set a higher value on skill than force, and that it gives me no gratification to see half-a-dozen gentlemen racing round a piece of sward for the entertainment of a mob of gamekeepers and ploughmen."

"Nay—for our own entertainment and yours, dearest mother," replied the young man gently. "We have never yet shut our park-gates on these good people; but their presence goes for nothing in what we do to-day."

He spoke very deferentially, but with a faint flush of annoyance on his face, and passed on to where Miss Hatherton was chatting with Saxon Trefalden.

"It will be a long time," she said, "before I can forgive you for my disappointment of this

morning. You could have beaten everybody at everything, if you had pleased. It was an absurd piece of Quixotism, and I am very angry with you for it. There—don't attempt to deny it. Lord Castletowers has confessed, and it is of no use for you to plead not guilty."

"Lord Castletowers never saw me leap a foot or run a yard in his life," said Saxon emphatically. "He knows nothing of what I can or cannot do."

"I am here to answer for myself," said the Earl, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder. "And I *do* know that you can put a bullet through a shifting weathercock at five hundred yards."

"A mere trick!"

"Not so. Skill is no more to be confounded with trickery than pocket-picking with legerdemain. I am entirely of Miss Hatherton's opinion, and am certain you could have beaten us all round if you had chosen to take the trouble."

"You will find out your mistake presently, when

you have all left me in the rear," said Saxon, a little impatiently. "I would recommend no one to bet upon me."

"*I mean to bet upon you, Mr. Trefalden,*" said Miss Hatherton.

"Pray don't; you will be sure to lose your money."

"I don't believe it; or if I do, I shall call upon you to pay my debts, for I shall be certain you have lagged behind on purpose."

At this moment one or two of the others came up, and the conversation turned upon the preceding contests.

"Mr. Trefalden," said Miss Colonna, "will you be kind enough to tell me how many times you have to make the circuit of the ground, in this one-mile race?"

Miss Colonna's chair stood next to Miss Hatherton's, but was placed about half-a-foot in advance, by right of her prerogative. As she turned to address him, Saxon dropped out of the heiress's coterie, and, moving round by the back of her chair, replied:—

"Exactly six times, Mademoiselle."

“Will you come round to this side, Mr. Trefalden?” said Olimpia, in a low tone, “I have something to say to you.”

Not without some vague sense of surprise, the young man passed on behind the second chair, and presented himself at Miss Colonna’s left hand.

“You are really going to contest this one-mile race, are you not?” she asked.

“I have entered my name with the rest,” replied Saxon.

“Then you mean, of course, to win if you can?”

Saxon looked embarrassed.

“I have entered my name,” said he, “but I am not sure that I shall run, for all that. Somebody must act as judge; and I prefer not to race if I can help it.”

“But I particularly prefer that you should race, Mr. Trefalden,” said Olimpia, dropping her voice to a still lower key; “I want you to win me that purse of twenty guineas for my dear Italy.”

“It will be yours, and Italy’s, Mademoiselle, whoever wins it.”

"I know that, Mr. Trefalden."

"Then what difference can it make whether I, or another, carry off the prize?" said Saxon, wondering.

"It *does* make a difference," replied Olimpia, lifting her eyes suddenly to his.

Saxon felt fluttered, without knowing why.

"What difference?" faltered he.

"Must I tell you?"

"If—if you please."

"Will you promise to win for me, if I do?"

"I don't know—I will try."

"I ask no more than that. If you really try, I am confident of victory. Well, then, I want you to win because—I suppose, because I am a woman; and all women are capricious."

Saxon looked puzzled.

"I don't think you are capricious," he said.

"Do you not? Then I am afraid that is because you are a man; and all men are vain. There is a pair of maxims for you."

"Maxims for which I can discover no application," replied Saxon laughingly. "Why should I be accused of vanity because I refuse to

believe that Mademoiselle Colonna is guilty of caprice ? ”

“ I am afraid you are very dull to-day, Mr. Trefalden,—or very subtle.”

“ I know I am not subtle,” said Saxon, “ but I must be dreadfully dull.”

“ If your feet do not outstrip your apprehension, you will scarcely win the cup. What bell is that ? ”

“ It’s the signal for assembling,” replied Saxon ; “ I must go now ; and you have not told me after all.”

“ But you have promised me that you will try.”

“ No, no—my promise was conditional on your explanation.”

“ But have I not told you that women are capricious ? ”

“ What of that ? ”

“ We sometimes value a cowslip from one hand more than a rose from another ; and—and perhaps I am so capricious as to prefer the Italian cup from yours. Hark ! there is the second bell. Now, go ; and bring me back the prize.”

The tone in which this was said—the gesture,

half persuasive, half imperious—the dazzling smile by which it was accompanied, were more than enough to turn an older head than Saxon Trefalden's. He stammered something, he scarcely knew what; and his heart leaped, he scarcely knew why.

“If you do not go at once,” said Miss Colonna, “you will be too late. Shall I give you my glove for a favour. Be a true knight, and deserve it.”

Breathless, intoxicated, the young man pressed the glove to his lips, thrust it into his bosom, leaped down upon the course, and flew to take his place among the runners. He felt as if his feet were clad in the winged sandals of Hermes, as if his head touched the clouds, and the very air were sunshine. It was delightful, this sense of exaltation and rapture—and quite new.

Not so, however, felt Olimpia Colonna. Saxon had no sooner jumped from the platform, than the colour died out suddenly from her face, and the smile from her lips. She leaned back in her chair with a look of intense pain and weariness, and sighed heavily. There were three persons observing her; but her thoughts were very bitter

at that moment, and she was quite unconscious of their scrutiny. Those persons were Lady Castletowers; Signor Colonna, who had but just arrived and was leaning on the back of her chair; and Miss Hatherton—and neither the look of pain nor the sigh was lost on either of the three.

CHAPTER XI.

BRAVO, ANTINOUS !

THE two Pulteneys stayed out, the one to act as judge, the other as time-keeper ; and the time-keeper was to give the starting signal by firing a pistol.

In the meanwhile, the eight competitors were ranged side by side, close under the ladies' platform, with the sleeves of their jerseys rolled up above their elbows, the arms drawn close to their bodies, and their clenched fists pressed against their chests—all lithe and eager-looking, like a pack of greyhounds. Of these, the two tallest and fairest were Saxon Trefalden and Sir Charles Burgoyne. Sir Charles was the handsomer man ; but Saxon was a shade the taller, and something more than a shade broader across the shoulders.

Well might Miss Hatherton call him the golden-haired Antinous; only that he was Antinous on a grander scale than the famous Antinous of the Capitol—Antinous with Herculean possibilities of strength and speed.

With the exception of Lord Castletowers, whose jersey was of a creamy white, just the tint of his flannel trousers, the young men were each distinguished by the colours of their shirts. Saxon's was striped pink and white; Burgoyne's light blue and white; Vaughan's mauve and white; and so on.

All was ready. The course was clear; the spectators silent; the competitors drawn up and waiting. Suddenly, the timekeeper threw up his hand, and fired in the air. At the same instant, as if shot from his pistol, the eight runners sprang forward, and the race began.

They had no sooner started than Saxon took the lead, running lightly and steadily, with his head well up, and his curls dancing in the sun. He was obviously putting but little labour into his running, and yet, at the first three or four bounds, he had gained a good ten feet on his

companions. Next in order came Castletowers, Vaughan, and Burgoyne, almost level with each other ; and close after them Edward Brandon, whose slightness of make and length of limb enabled him to run tolerably well for a short distance ; but whose want of real physique invariably knocked him up at the end of the first three hundred yards. Torrington, Greville, and Pelham Hay brought up the rear. In this order they ran the first round. At the second turn, however, just as they had neared the ladies' platform, Castletowers made a rush to the front, and passed Saxon by some three or four feet. At the same instant Vaughan and Burgoyne perceptibly increased their pace, widening the space between themselves and the four last at every stride.

And now Brandon, who had for some seconds begun to show symptoms of distress, came suddenly to a standstill ; and, being passed by those in the rear, fell, pale and panting, to the earth.

In the meanwhile Saxon had in nowise quickened his pace, or attempted to regain his lead ; but kept on at precisely the same rate throughout the whole of the second round. Just as they

were beginning the third, however, and at the very point where Castletowers had made his rush, Saxon, without any apparent effort, bounded ahead, and again left his friend some three yards behind.

Torrington, Greville, and Hay now dropped out of the ranks, one by one, and gave up the contest; leaving only Saxon and Castletowers, Vaughan and Burgoyne on the ground. Presently the two latter came into collision, and went down as if they had been shot, but were on their feet again in the twinkling of an eye, and flying on as before.

At the fourth round, Castletowers brought himself up abreast of Saxon. At the fifth Burgoyne gave in, and Vaughan flagged obviously; but Castletowers again dashed forward, and again secured the lead.

A subdued murmur that broke now and then into a cheer, ran round the course. Every eye was riveted upon the runners. Every head turned as they turned, and was outstretched to follow them. The ladies rose on the platform, and watched them through their glasses. There

were only three now—a white shirt, a pink shirt, and a mauve; but white and pink divided the suffrages of the lookers-on, and nobody cared a straw for mauve.

Again the circuit was nearly completed and they were approaching the stand. The next round would be the sixth and last. The interest of the moment became intense. The murmur swelled again, and became a shout—hats were waved handkerchiefs fluttered—even Lady Castletowers leaned forward with a glow of real excitement on her face.

On they came—the Earl first, in his white jersey, pale as marble, breathing in short heavy gasps, lips quivering, brows closely knitted, keeping up his lead gallantly, but keeping it by dint of sheer pluck and nervous energy. Saxon next, a little flushed, but light of foot and self-possessed as ever, as fresh apparently as when he first started, and capable of running on at the same steady rate for any number of miles that might be set before him. Vaughan last—coming up very heavily, and full twenty yards in the rear.

“Good Heavens!” cried Miss Hatherton, half

beside herself with impatience, "how *can* he let Lord Castletowers keep the lead?"

"Because he cannot help it," said Olimpia, scornfully triumphant. She had forgotten that Saxon was her chosen knight, and all her sympathies were with the Earl.

"Absurd! he has but to put out a little more speed and he *must* win. The Earl is nearly— There! there! did I not tell you so? Bravo, Antinous!"

They passed the platform; and as they passed, Saxon looked up with an ardent smile, waved his hand to Olimpia, threw up his head like a young war-horse, bounded forward as if the winged sandals were really on his feet, and passed the Earl as easily as a man on horseback passes a man on foot. Till this moment the race, earnest enough for the rest, had been mere play to him. Till this moment he had not attempted to put out his speed, or show what he could do. Now he flashed past the astonished spectators like a meteor. His feet seemed scarcely to touch the turf—his body seemed as if borne upon the air. A great roar of admiration burst from the crowd; and in the

midst of the roar, before Lord Castletowers had got over a third of the distance, Saxon had made the sixth round, and passed the winning post by several feet.

“Won by a hundred and eighty yards,” said Pulteney, timekeeper. “Last round, thirty-one seconds and a-half. By Jove, sir, though I’ve seen it myself, I can scarcely believe it !”

Saxon laughed joyously.

“I could have done it almost as easily,” said he, “if it had been up hill all the way.”

And what did Olimpia Colonna say to her chosen knight, when he received the prize from her hands, only to lay it the next moment at her feet ? Doubtless she remembered in good time that Saxon *was* her chosen knight, and forgot how disloyally her sympathies had strayed from him in the race. Doubtless her greeting had in it something poisonously sweet, subtle, intoxicating—to judge, at least, by the light in his face, as he bowed and turned away.

CHAPTER XII.

ELTON HOUSE, KENSINGTON.

MR. ABEL KECKWITCH with William Trefalden's private address in his pocket-book, felt much as Adrian the Fourth may have felt with haughty Barbarossa prostrate at his feet. He took it for granted that there was some dark secret at the bottom of his master's daily life. He knew quite well that a practical man like William Trefalden would never take the trouble to surround himself with mystery unless he had something to hide, and to that something Abel Keckwitch believed he now possessed the key. It never occurred to him that William Trefalden might possibly object to let such loquacious stones as copying clerks prate of his whereabouts, for other than criminal reasons. If such an idea had been suggested to him, he would have laughed it

to scorn. So, to do him justice, would Mr. Kidd. Both the detective and the lawyer's clerk were too familiar with the dark side of human nature to believe for a moment that systematic mystery meant anything less than undiscovered crime.

So Abel Keckwitch took his master's address home with him, fairly written out in Mr. Nicodemus Kidd's clear business hand, and exulted therein. He was in no haste to act upon the information folded up in that little slip of paper. It was not in his nature to be in haste about anything, least of all about so sweet a dish as revenge. It must be prepared slowly, tasted a morsel at a time, and made to last as long as possible. Above all, it must be carefully considered beforehand from every point of view, and be spoiled by no blunder at starting. So he copied the address into his common-place book, committed it to memory, pondered over it, gloated over it, and fed his imagination on it for days before he proceeded to take any fresh steps in the matter.

“ELTON HOUSE, KENSINGTON.”

Such was the address given to him by Mr.

Nicodemus Kidd. "Elton House, Kensington;" not a word more—not a word less. It was an address that told nothing—suggested nothing. "Elton Villa" would have bespoken a neat, stuccoed anachronism in the Græco-Gothic style; "Elton Lodge," a prim modern residence, with gardens, gates, and a carriage-drive; "Elton Cottage," an unassuming little place, shrinking back from the high road in a screen of lilacs and laburnums. But "Elton House" represented none of these to the mind's eye. "Elton House" might be ancient or modern, large or small, a cockney palace, or a relic of the old court days. There was nothing in its name to assist conjecture in any way. Thus again, the very suburb was perplexing. Of all districts round about London, there is none so diverse in its characteristics as Kensington—none so old in part, so new in part; so stately here, so squalid there; so of the country countrified in one direction, so of the town towny in another. Elton House might partake of any of these conditions for aught that one could gather from its name.

In short, Mr. Abel Keckwitch turned the address over in his mind much as some people turn their letters over, stimulating their curiosity instead of gratifying it, and spelling out the motto on the seal, instead of breaking it.

At length he resolved to go over to Kensington and reconnoitre the ground. Having come to this determination one Saturday afternoon (on which day, when practicable, Mr. Trefalden dismissed his clerks at five o'clock), Abel Keckwitch pushed forward with his work; closed the office precisely as St. Dunstan's clock was striking; and, instead of trudging, as usual, direct to Pentonville, turned his face westward, and hailed the first Hammersmith omnibus that came by.

It was a lovely afternoon; warm, sunny, summerlike. Mr. Trefalden's head-clerk knew that the park trees were in all the beauty of their early leafage, and that the air beyond Charing Cross would be delicious; and he was sorely tempted to take a seat on the roof. But prudence prevailed. To risk observation would be to imperil the very end for which he was

working ; so, with a sigh, he gave up the air and the sunshine, and took an inside place next the door.

The omnibus soon filled, and, once closely packed, rattled merrily on, till it drew up for the customary five minutes' rest at the White Horse Cellar. Then, of course, came the well-known newsvender with the evening papers ; and the traditionary old lady who has always been waiting for the last three-quarters of an hour ; and the conductor's vain appeal to the gallantry of gentlemen who will *not* go outside to oblige a lady—would prefer, in fact, to see a dozen ladies boiled first.

This interlude played out, the omnibus rattled on again to the corner of Sloane Street, where several passengers alighted ; and thence proceeded at a sober, leisurely rate along the Kensington-road, with the green, broad park lying all along to the right, and row after row of stately terraces to the left.

“Put me down, conductor,” said Mr. Keck-witch, “at the first turning beyond Elton House.”

He had weighed every word of this apparently simple sentence, and purposely waited till the omnibus was less crowded, before delivering it. He knew that the Kensington-road, taken from the point where Knightsbridge is supposed to end, up to that other point where Hammersmith is supposed to begin, covers a fair three miles of ground; and he wanted to be set down as near as possible to the spot of which he was in search. But then it was essential that he should not seem to be looking for Elton House, or going to Elton House, or inquiring about Elton House in any way; so he worded his little speech with an ingenuity that was quite masterly as far as it went.

"Elton House, sir?" said the conductor. "Don't know it. What's the name of the street?"

Mr. Keckwitch took a letter from his pocket, and affected to look for the address.

"Ah!" he replied, refolding it with a disappointed air, "that I cannot tell you. My directions only say, 'the first turning beyond Elton House.' I am a stranger to this part of London, myself."

The conductor scratched his ear, looked puzzled, and applied to the driver.

“ ‘Arry,” said he. “ Know Elton House ? ”

“ Elton House ? ” repeated the driver. “ Can’t say I do.”

“ I think I have heard the name,” observed a young man on the box.

“ I’m sure I’ve seen it somewhere,” said another on the roof.

And this was all the information to be had on the subject.

Mr. Keckwitch’s ingenious artifice had failed. Elton House was evidently not to be found without enquiry—therefore enquiry must be made. It was annoying, but there was no help for it. Just as he had made up his mind to this alternative, the omnibus reached Kensington-gate, and the conductor put the same question to the toll-taker that he had put to the driver.

“ Davy—know Elton House ? ”

The toll-taker—a shaggy fellow, with a fur cap on his head and a straw in his mouth—pointed with his thumb over his shoulder, and replied :—

“Somewhere down by Slade’s-lane, beyond the westry.”

On hearing which, Mr. Keckwitch’s countenance brightened, and he requested to be set down at Slade’s-lane, wherever that might be.

Slade’s Lane proved to be a narrow, winding irregular by-street, leading out from the high road, and opening at the farther end upon fields and market-gardens. There were houses on only one side; and on the other, high walls with tree-tops peeping over, and here and there a side-door.

The dwellings in Slade’s Lane were of different degrees of smallness; scarcely two of the same height; and all approached by little slips of front garden, more or less cultivated. There were lodgings to let, evidences of humble trades, and children playing about the gardens and door-steps of most of them. Altogether, a more unlikely spot for William Trefalden to reside in could scarcely have been selected.

Having alighted from the omnibus at the top of

this street, Mr. Keckwitch, after a hurried glance to left and right, chose the wall side and walked very composedly along, taking rapid note of each door that he passed, but looking as stolid and unobservant as possible.

The side-doors were mostly painted of a dull green, with white numerals, and were evidently mere garden entrances to houses facing in an opposite direction.

All at once, just at that point where the lane made a sudden bend to the right and turned off towards the market-gardens, Mr. Keckwitch found himself under the shadow of a wall considerably higher than the rest, and close against a gateway flanked by a couple of stone pillars. This gate occupied exactly the corner where the road turned, so that it blunted the angle, as it were, and commanded the lane in both directions. It was a wooden gate—old, ponderous, and studded with iron bosses, just wide enough, apparently, for a carriage to drive through, and many feet higher than it was wide. In it was a small wicket door. The stone pillars were time-stained and battered, and looked as if they might have stood there since

the days when William of Orange brought his Dutch court to Kensington. In one of them was a plain brass bell-handle. On both were painted, in faded and half illegible letters, the words, "Elton House."

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. KECKWITCH PROVES HIMSELF TO BE A MAN OF ORIGINAL GENIUS.

A THRILL of virtuous satisfaction pervaded Mr. Keckwitch's respectable bosom at this discovery. He had gained the first great step, and gained it easily. The rest would be more difficult ; but it was sure to follow. Besides, he was not the man to be daunted by such obstacles as were likely to present themselves in an undertaking of this kind. They were obstacles of precisely that nature which his slow, dogged, cautious temperament was best fitted to deal with ; and he knew this. Perhaps, on the whole, he rather liked that there should be some difficulties in the way, that he might have the satisfaction of overcoming them. At all events, they gave an additional zest to the pursuit that he had in hand ; and though his hatred

needed no stimulus, Mr. Keckwitch, like most phlegmatic men, was not displeased to be stimulated.

Sufficient, however, for the day was the triumph thereof. Here was the gate of Elton House ; and only to have penetrated so far into William Trefalden's mystery was an achievement of no slight importance. But the head-clerk was not contented only to see the gate. He wanted to have a glimpse of the house as well ; and so walked on to the bottom of the lane, crossed over, and returned up the other side. The lane, however, was narrow, and the walls were high ; so that, take it from what point he would, the house remained invisible. He could see the tops of two or three sombre-looking trees, and a faint column of smoke melting away as it rose against the background of blue sky ; but that was all, and he was none the wiser for the sight. So, knowing that he risked observation every moment that he lingered in Slade's-lane, he turned quickly back again towards the market-gardens, and passed out through a little turnstile leading to a footway shut in by thick green hedges on either side.

He could not tell in the least where this path would lead him ; but, seeing a network of similar walks intersecting the enclosures in various directions, he hoped to double back, somehow or another, into the main road. In the meanwhile, he hurried on till a bend in the path carried him well out of sight of the entrance to Slade's-lane, and there paused to rest in the shade of an apple-orchard.

It was now about half-past six o'clock. The sun was still shining ; the evening was still warm ; the apple-blossoms filled the air with a delicious perfume. All around and before him, occupying the whole space of ground between Kensington and Brompton, lay nothing but meadows and fruit-gardens, and orchards heavy with blossoms, white and pink. A pleasant, peaceful scene, not without some kind of vernal beauty for appreciative eyes.

But Mr. Keckwitch's dull orbs, however feebly appreciative they might be at other times, were blind just now to every impresssion of beauty. Waiting there in the shade, he wiped the perspiration from his forehead, recovered his breath as he best could, and thought only of how he might

turn his journey to some farther account before going back to town. It was much to have discovered Elton House ; but he had yet to learn what manner of life was led in it by William Trefalden. It would have been something only to have caught a glimpse through an open gate, to have seen whether the house were large or small, cheerful or dismal. He had expected to find it dull and dilapidated, with half the windows shuttered up, and the rest all black with the smoke of many years ; and he did not feel inclined to go away in as much ignorance of these points as when he left Chancery Lane. Suddenly an idea occurred to him—a very bright, ingenious idea, which gave him so much satisfaction that he indulged in a little inaudible laugh, and started forward again quite briskly, to find his way out of this labyrinth of hedgerows and cabbage-gardens.

He had not gone many yards before he came to a cross road whence more paths branched off in every direction. Here, however, like a large blue spider in the midst of his web, stood a portly policeman, from whom Mr. Keckwitch at once learned his nearest way to Palace Gardens, and

followed it. He asked for Palace Gardens this time, being anxious to emerge upon the High Street without again venturing too close to Slade's Lane in broad daylight.

Having come out at this point, Mr. Keckwitch went into the first stationer's shop that he could see, and bought a ledger. The stationer had some difficulty in supplying him, for the ledger he required was of a somewhat unusual shape and size. "It must be oblong," he said, "plain ruled, and bound in red leather." He would not have it ruled off in columns for accounts, and the stationer had none that were not ruled in that manner. At last he found one that was quite plain—a mere oblong book of Bath-post paper bound in purple cloth, with scarlet leather back and corners; and with this, although it was not exactly what he wanted, Mr. Trefalden's head-clerk was forced to content himself. He also bought a ruler, a small bottle of ink, and a couple of quill pens, saying that he would rule the book himself.

It was now striking seven by Kensington church clock; and Mr. Keckwitch, who was not

used to going without his tea, inquired his way to the nearest coffee-house, which proved to be in Church-street, close by. It was a modest little place enough ; but he made himself very comfortable there, establishing himself at a table at the farther end of the room, calling for lights and a substantial tea, and setting to work at once upon the ruling of his ledger. When he had done about a dozen pages, he divided each into three parts by a couple of vertical lines, and desired the waiter to bring him the London Post-office Directory. But he did not look in it for Elton House. He had searched for that some days back, and found no mention of it. He simply opened it at KENSINGTON HIGH-STREET, page four hundred and forty-nine, and proceeded patiently and methodically to copy out its contents under the several titles of Name, Address, and Occupation. By the time that he had thus filled in some four or five pages and finished his tea, it was half-past eight o'clock, and quite dark.

That is to say, it was quite dark in the sky overhead, but quite brilliant in Kensington High-

street. That picturesque thoroughfare was lighted up for the evening. The shops blazed with gas; the pavements were crowded; there was a brass band playing at the public house at the corner; and the very fruit and oyster-stalls in front of the church were bright with lanterns. The place, in fact, was as light as at noonday, and Mr. Keckwitch, who wished to avoid observation, was naturally somewhat disturbed, and a good deal disappointed. He had, however, made up his mind to do a certain thing, and he was determined to go through with it; so he pulled his hat a little more over his eyes, put his ink-bottle and pens in the breast-pocket of his coat, tucked his ledger under his arm, and went boldly out in the direction of Slade's-lane.

He had observed a baker's shop within a few doors of the corner where the omnibus had set him down, and this shop was his present destination. He went in with the assured step of a man who is about his regular work, touched his hat to a pleasant-looking woman behind the counter, and said:—

“I am going round, ma'am, for the new

Directory. There's been no change here, I suppose, since last year?"

"No, sir; no change whatever," she replied.

Mr. Keckwitch opened his ledger on the counter, pulled out one of his quill pens, and drew his fat forefinger down a certain column of names.

"Wilson, Emma, baker and confectioner," said he, reading one of the entries. "Is that quite right, ma'am?"

"Fancy bread and biscuit baker, if you please, sir," replied Mrs. Wilson. "Not confectioner."

"Thank you, ma'am. Fancy bread and biscuit baker."

And Mr. Keckwitch drew his pen through "confectioner," and substituted Mrs. Wilson's emendation with a business-like gravity that did him credit.

"I thought the Post-office Directory for this year was out already, sir," observed Mrs. Wilson, as he blotted off the entry, and closed his ledger.

"This is not the Post-office Directory, ma'am," said Mr. Keckwitch, calmly. "This is a new

Directory of the Western and South-Western districts."

"Oh indeed! a sort of new Court Guide, I suppose?"

"Just so, ma'am. A sort of new Court Guide. Wish you good evenin'."

"Good evening, sir," replied Mrs. Wilson, as he again raised his finger half-way to the brim of his hat, and left the shop. He had scarcely passed the threshold, however, when he paused, and turned back.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, for troubling you again," he said; "but perhaps you can tell me who lives at Elton House?"

"Elton House?"

"Yes; Elton House, in Slade's-lane. I've been knocking and ringing there till I'm tired, and can get no one to come to the gate. Is it uninhabited?"

Mr. Keckwitch said this so naturally, and with such an air of ill-used respectability, that detective Kidd himself would scarcely have doubted the truth of his statement. As for Mrs. Wilson, she accepted every word of it in perfect good faith.

"Oh, no," she replied, "it's not uninhabited. The name is Duvernay."

"Duvernay," repeated Mr. Trefalden's head-clerk, re-opening his ledger, and dipping his pen in Mrs. Wilson's ink. "With your leave, ma'am. A foreign family, I suppose?"

"I think she is French."

"And Mr. Duvernay—can you tell me what profession to enter?"

"There is no Mr. Duvernay," said Mrs. Wilson, with an odd little cough, and a slight elevation of the eyebrows. "At least, not that I am aware of."

Mr. Keckwitch looked up with that dull light in his eyes that only came to them under circumstances of strong excitement. Mrs. Wilson looked down, and coughed again.

"Is the lady a widow?" he asked, huskily.

"I believe she calls herself a widow," replied Mrs. Wilson; "but indeed, sir, I can't say what she is."

"And there's no gentleman?"

"I didn't say that, sir."

"I beg your pardon, I thought I understood so."

“I said there was no Mr. Duvernay; and no more there is. But I don’t desire to speak ill of my neighbours, and Madam’s a customer.”

Mr. Keckwitch shook his head solemnly.

“Dear! dear!” said he. “Very sad, very sad, indeed! A wicked world, ma’am. So little real respectability in it.”

“Very true, sir.”

“Then I suppose I must simply put down *Madame Duvernay*, there being no master to the house.”

“I suppose so, sir. There is no master that I know of; at least, no acknowledged master.”

“Still, if there is a gentleman, and he lives in the house, as I think you implied just now”

“Oh, sir, I imply nothing,” said the mistress of the shop, somewhat impatiently, as if she had had enough of the subject. “*Madame Duvernay*’s doings are nothing to me; and the gentleman may be her husband for aught I know to the contrary.”

“You cannot give me his name, ma’am?”

“ No, sir.”

“ I am sorry for that. I ought to have his name if he really lives in the house.”

“ I cannot give it to you, because I don’t know it,” said Mrs. Wilson, rather more graciously. “ I cannot even take it upon myself to say that he lives at Elton House. There is a gentleman there, I believe, very constantly ; but he may be a visitor. I really can’t tell ; and it’s no business of mine.”

“ Nor of mine, if he is only a visitor,” replied Mr. Keckwitch, again closing his ledger, and preparing to be gone. “ We take no note of visitors, but we’re bound to take note of regular inhabitants. I’m very much obliged to you ma’am—very much indeed.”

“ I’m sure, sir, you’re very welcome.”

“ Thank you. A little help often goes a long way in matters of this kind ; and it isn’t pleasant to stand at a gate knocking and ringing for half-an-hour together.”

“ No, indeed ; far from it, sir. I can’t think what all the servants were about, to let you do so.”

“ Good evenin’ once more, ma’am.”

“ Good evening, sir.”

And Mr. Keckwitch walked out of the shop, this time without turning back again.

CHAPTER XIV.

DESPATCHES FROM ITALY.

“I LOVE this terrace,” said Miss Colonna; “it is so like the terrace of an Italian house.”

“I am always glad, for that reason, when the spring is sufficiently advanced to let us put out the orange trees,” replied Lord Castletowers.

It was shortly after breakfast, and they had all strolled out through the open windows. The tide of guests had ebbed away some days since, and the party was once more reduced to its former numbers.

“Yes,” said Olimpia, “the dear old orange trees and the terra cotta vases go far to heighten the illusion—so long as one avoids looking back at the house.”

“Or round upon the landscape,” suggested Saxon, smiling; “for these park trees are as

English as the architecture of the house. What is the style, Castletowers? ”

“ Oh ! I don’t know. Elizabethan—Tudor—English-Gothic. I suppose they all mean the same thing. Shall I cut down my poor old oaks, Miss Colonna, and plant olives and poplars in their place? ”

“ Yes, if you will give me the Sabine for the Surrey hills, and an Italian sky overhead.”

“ I would if I could—I wish it were possible,” said Castletowers, earnestly.

“ Nay, I always see them,” replied Olimpia, with a sigh. “ I see them now—so plainly ! ”

“ But you Italians never have the *mal de pays*,” said Saxon.

“ How can you tell that, Mr. Trefalden ? I think we have.”

“ No, no. You love your Italy ; but you do not suffer in absence as we suffer. The true *mal de pays* runs in no blood but the Swiss.”

“ You will not persuade me that you love Switzerland better than we love Italy,” said Olimpia.

"But I believe we do," replied Saxon. "Your *amor patria* is, perhaps, a more intellectual passion than ours. It is bound up with your wonderful history, your pride of blood and pride of place; but I cannot help believing that we Swiss do actually cherish a more intense feeling for our native soil."

"For the soil?" repeated Castletowers.

"Yes, for the clay beneath our feet, and the peaks above our heads. Our mountains are as dear to us as if they were living things, and could love us back again. They enter into our inner consciousness. They exercise a subtle influence upon our minds, and upon our bodies through our minds. They are a part of ourselves."

"Metaphorically speaking," said the Earl.

"Their effects are not metaphorical," replied Saxon.

"What are their effects?"

"What we were speaking of just now, the *mal de pays*, the sickness in absence."

"But that is a sickness of the mind," said Olimpia.

"Not at all. It is a physical malady."

“ May one inquire how it attacks the patient ? ” asked the Earl, incredulously.

“ Some are suddenly stricken down, as if by a *coup de soleil*. Some fade slowly away. In either case, it is the inexpressible longing, for which there is no cure save Switzerland.”

“ And supposing that your invalid cannot get away—what then ? ”

“ I fear he would die.”

The Earl laughed aloud.

“ And I fear he would do nothing of the kind,” said he. “ Depend on it, Trefalden, this is one of those pretty fictions that everybody believes, and nobody can prove.”

“ My dear Gervase,” said Lady Castletowers, passing the little group as she returned to the house, “ Signor Colonna is waiting to speak to you.”

Colonna was leaning over the balustrade at the farther end of the terrace, reading a letter. He looked up as the Earl approached, and said, eagerly :—

“ A despatch from Baldiserotti ! Garibaldi has sailed from Genoa in the *Piemonte*, and Bixio in

the *Lombardo*. The sword is drawn at last, and the scabbard thrown away ! ”

The Earl's face flushed with excitement.

“ This is great news,” said he. “ When did it come ? ”

“ With the other letters ; but I waited to tell it to you when your mother was not present.”

“ Does Vaughan know ? ”

“ Not yet. He went to his room when he left the breakfast table, and I have not seen him since.”

“ What is the strength of the expedition ? ”

“ One thousand and sixty-seven.”

“ No more ? ”

“ Thousands more ; but they have at present no means of transport. This is but an advanced guard of tried men ; chiefly old Cacciatori. Genoa is full of volunteers, all eager to embark.”

“ I would give ten years from my life to be among them,” said Castletowers, earnestly.

The Italian laid his hand caressingly upon the young man's arm.

“ *Pazienza, caro,*” he replied. “ You do good

service here. Come with me to my room. There is work for us this morning."

The Earl glanced towards Olimpia and Saxon; opened his lips as if to speak; checked himself, and followed somewhat reluctantly.

CHAPTER XV.

A BROKEN PROMISE.

IT must be conceded that Miss Colonna had not made the most of her opportunities. She had not actually withdrawn from the game; but she had failed to follow up her first great move so closely as a less reluctant player might have done. And yet she meant to act this part which she had undertaken. She knew that, if she did so, it must be at the sacrifice of her own peace, of her own womanly self-respect. She was quite aware, too, that it involved a cruel injustice to Saxon Trefalden. But with her, as with all enthusiasts, the greater duty included the less; and she believed that, although it would be morally wrong to do these things for any other end, it would be practically right to do them for Italy.

If she could not bring herself to lead this generous heart astray without a struggle—if she pitied the young man's fate, and loathed her own, and shrunk from the path that she was pledged to tread—she did so by reason of the finer part of her nature, but contrary to her convictions of duty. For to her, Italy was duty; and when her instinctive sense of right stepped in, as it had stepped in now, she blamed herself bitterly.

But this morning's post had brought matters to a crisis. Her father's face, as he handed her the despatch across the breakfast table, told her that; and she knew that if she was ever to act decisively, she must act so now. When, therefore, she found herself alone with Saxon on the terrace, she scarcely paused to think how she should begin, but plunged at once into her task.

"You *must* not think we love our country less passionately than the Swiss, Mr. Trefalden," she said, quickly. "It needs no *mal de pays* to prove the heart of a people; and when you know us better, you will, I am sure, be one of the first to acknowledge it. In the meanwhile, I cannot be happy till I convince you."

“I am glad you think me worth the trouble of convincing,” replied Saxon.

“How should I not? You are a patriot, and a republican.”

“That I am, heart and soul,” said Saxon, with sparkling eyes.

“We ought to have some sympathies in common.”

“Why, so we have. We have many. The love of country and the love of liberty are sympathies in common.”

“They should be,” replied Olimpia; “but, alas! between prosperity and adversity there can be little real fellowship. Yours, Mr. Trefalden, is the happiest country in Europe, and mine is the most miserable.”

“I wish yours were not so,” said Saxon.

“Wish, instead, that it may not remain so. Wish that women’s tears and brave men’s blood may not be shed in vain; nor a whole people be trodden back into slavery for want of a little timely help in the moment of their utmost need?”

“What do you mean?” said Saxon, catching

something of her excitement, without knowing why or wherefore.

“I mean that the work to which my father’s whole life has been given is at last begun. You know—all the world knows—that Sicily is in arms; but you have not yet been told that an army of liberation is assembling in the north.”

“In the north? Then the king of Sardinia”

“Victor Emmanuel is willing enough to reap the harvest watered with our blood,” replied Miss Colonna, impetuously; “but he will not offer us even a hearty ‘God-speed’ at present. No, Mr. Trefalden, ours is an army of volunteers and patriots only—an army of young, brave, and generous hearts that love Italy and liberty, and are ready to die for what they love!”

Beautiful as she was at all times, Saxon had never seen Olimpia Colonna look so beautiful as when she spoke these words. He almost lost the sense of what she said, in his admiration of how she looked while saying it. He stammered something unintelligible, and she went on.

“Garibaldi has sailed for Palermo with an

advanced guard. Volunteers are pouring into Genoa from Venice and Milan. Subscriptions are being raised on all hands—in England, in France, in Belgium, in America. A month hence, and South Italy will be free or doubly chained. In the meanwhile we need help; and for that help we look to every lover of liberty. You are a lover of liberty—you are a citizen of a model republic. What will you do for us? ”

“ Tell me what to do, and I will do it,” said Saxon.

“ Nay ; I might ask too much.”

“ You cannot ask more than I will gladly grant.”

Olimpia turned her dazzling smile upon him.

“ Beware,” said she. “ I may take you at your word. This cause, remember, is more to me than life ; and the men who enlist in it are my brothers.”

Alas ! for Saxon’s invulnerability, and his cousin’s repeated cautions ! Alas ! for his promises, his good resolves, and his government stock ! He was so far gone, that he would have

shouldered a musket and stepped into the ranks at that moment to please Miss Colonna.

“These men,” she continued, “want everything that goes to make a soldier—save valour. They are content to accept privation; but they can neither live without food, nor fight without arms, nor cross from shore to shore without means of transport. So take heed, Mr. Trefalden, how you offer more than you are prepared to give. I might say—do you love liberty well enough to supply some thousands of brave men with bread, ships, and muskets? And then, what would be your answer?”

Saxon drew a blank cheque from his purse, and laid it on the parapet against which she was leaning. He would have knelt down and laid it at her feet in open day, but that he had sense enough left to feel how supremely ludicrous the performance would be.

“There is my answer,” he said.

Miss Colonna’s heart gave a great leap of triumph, and the colour flashed up into her face. She took a tiny pencil-case from her watch-chain

—a mere toy of gold and jewels—and hastily pencilled some figures in the corner of the cheque.

“Will you do this for Italy?” she said, in a breathless whisper.

“I will double it for *you*!” replied Saxon, passionately.

“For me, Mr. Trefalden?”

Saxon was dumb. He feared he had offended her. He trembled at his temerity, and did not dare to lift his eyes to her face.

Finding he made no answer, she spoke again, in a soft, tremulous tone, that would have turned the head of St. Kevan himself.

“Why for me? What am I that you should do more for me than my country?”

“I—I would do anything for you,” faltered Saxon.

“Are you sure of that?”

“As sure as that I——”

He checked himself. He would have said, “as that I love you,” but he lacked courage to pronounce the words. Miss Colonna knew it, however, as well as if he had spoken the words.

"Would you jump into the sea for me, like Schiller's diver?" she asked, with a sudden change of mood, and a laugh like a peal of silver bells.

"That I would!"

"Or in among the fighting lions, like the Count de Lorge?"

"I know nothing about the Count de Lorge, but I would do for you all that a brave man dare do for a fair lady," replied Saxon, boldly.

"Thanks," she said, and her smile became graver as she spoke. "I think you mean what you say."

"I do. Indeed I do!"

"I believe it. Some day, perhaps, I shall put you to the proof."

With this, she gave him her hand, and he—scarcely knowing what he did, but feeling that he would cheerfully march up to a battery, or jump out of a balloon, or lie down in the path of an express train for her sake—kissed it!

And then he was so overwhelmed by the knowledge of what he had done, that he scarcely

noticed how gently Miss Colonna withdrew her hand from his, and turned away.

He watched her across the terrace. She did not look back. She went thoughtfully forward—thoughtfully and slowly—with her hands clasped loosely together, and her head a little bent; but her bearing was not that of a person in anger. When she had passed into the house, Saxon drew a deep breath, stood for a moment irresolute, and presently swung himself lightly over the parapet, and plunged into the park.

His head was in a whirl; and he wandered about for the first half-hour or so, in a tumult of rapturous wonder and exultation—and then he suddenly remembered that he had broken his promise to William Trefalden!

In the meanwhile, Olimpia went up to her father's study in the turret and stood before him, pale and stern, like a marble statue of herself.

Colonna looked up, and pushed his papers aside.

“Well,” he said eagerly, “what speed?”

“This.”

Saying which, she took a pen, deliberately filled in double the sum pencilled on the margin, and laid Saxon's cheque before him on the table.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CAUSE OF LIBERTY.

HAD Saxon been suddenly plunged into a cold bath, it could scarcely have brought him to his senses more rapidly than did the remembrance of his broken pledge, and the thought of what his lawyer cousin would say to him.

“It isn’t as if he hadn’t cautioned me, either,” said he, half aloud, as he sat himself down, “quite chopfallen,” at the foot of a great oak, in an unfrequented hollow of the park. And then one unpleasant recollection evoked another, and he remembered how William Trefalden had jested with him about fetters of flowers, and made him almost angry by so doing; and how he had boasted of himself as more invulnerable than Achilles. He also remembered that his cousin had especially inquired whether he had not yet

been called upon to subscribe to the Italian fund, and had given him much good advice as to what his conduct should be when that emergency might arise. To put his name down for a moderate sum, and commit himself to nothing further—those were William Trefalden's instructions to him; but how had he observed them? How had he observed that other promise of signing no more large cheques without consulting his cousin; and what reliance would his cousin place upon his promises in the future?

Saxon groaned in spirit as he thought of these things; and the more he thought of them, the more uncomfortable he became.

He did not care in the least about the money, although he had, in truth, been mulcted of an enormous sum; but he cared a great deal about breaking his word, and he saw that it must be broken on the one hand or the other. He also saw on which hand it was to be.

He had given the cheque to Miss Colonna, and Miss Colonna must have the money; there was clearly no help for that. But then he entertained misgivings as to the cheque itself, and

began to doubt whether he had anything like balance enough at his banker's to meet it. In this case, what was to be done? The money, of course, must be got; but who was to get it, and how was the getting of it to be achieved? Would that mysterious process called "selling out" have to be gone through?

Saxon puzzled his brains over those abstruse financial questions till his head ached; but could make nothing of them. At last he came to the very disagreeable conclusion that William Trefalden was alone capable of solving the difficulty, and must be consulted without delay; but at the same time, he did not feel at all sure that his cousin might not flatly refuse to help him in the matter. This was a fearful supposition, and almost drove the young fellow to despair. For Saxon loved the lawyer in his simple, honest way—not so much, perhaps, for any loveable qualities that he might imagine him to possess, as for the mere fact that his cousin was his cousin, and he trusted him. He had also a vague idea that William Trefalden had done a great deal to serve him, and that he owed him a profound debt of

gratitude. Anyhow, he would not offend him for the universe—and yet he was quite resolved that Miss Colonna should have the full benefit of her cheque.

Thinking thus, he remembered that he had authorised her to double the amount. What if she should take him at his word?

“By Jove, then,” said he, addressing a plump rabbit that had been gravely watching him from a convenient distance for some minutes past, “I can’t help it, if she does. The money’s my own, after all, and I have the right to give it away, if I choose. Besides, I’ve given it in the cause of liberty!”

But his heart told him that liberty had played a very unimportant part in the transaction.

CHAPTER XVII.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.

IN the meanwhile, a general council was being held in the octagon turret. The councillors were Signór Colonna, Lord Castletowers, and Major Vaughan, and the subjects under discussion were Baldiserotti's despatch and Saxon Trefalden's cheque.

The despatch was undoubtedly an important one, and contained more stirring news than any which had transpired from Italy since the Napoleonic campaign; but that other document, with its startling array of numerals, was certainly not less momentous. In Major Vaughan's opinion it was the more momentous of the two; and yet his brow darkened over it, and it seemed to the two others that he was not altogether so well pleased as he might have been.

Castletowers was genuinely delighted, and as much surprised as delighted.

"It is a noble gift," said he. "I had not dreamed that Trefalden was so staunch a friend to the cause."

"I was not aware that Mr. Trefalden had hitherto interested himself about Italy in any way," observed Major Vaughan, coldly.

"Well, he has interested himself now to some purpose. Besides, he has but just come into his fortune."

Signor Colonna smoothed the cheque as it lay before him on the desk, filled in the date, crossed it, and inserted his own name as that of the person to whom it was payable.

"I wonder what I had better do with it," said he, thoughtfully.

"With what?" asked the Earl.

Colonna pointed to the cheque with the feather end of his pen.

"Why, cash it, of course, and send the money off without delay."

The Italian smiled and shook his head. He was a better man of business than his host, and he

foresaw some of those very difficulties which were the cause of so much perplexity to Saxon himself.

“It is not always easy to cash large sums,” said he. “I must speak to Mr. Trefalden before I do anything with his cheque. Is he in the house?”

To which the Earl replied that he would see; and left the room.

After he was gone, Vaughan and Colonna went back to the despatch, and discussed the position of affairs in Sicily. Thence they passed on to the question of supplies, and consulted about the best means of bestowing Saxon's donation. At last they agreed that the larger share should be sent out in money, and the rest expended on munitions of war.

“It's a heavy sum,” said the dragoon. “If you want a messenger to take it over, I am at your service.”

“Thanks. Can you go the day after to-morrow?”

“To-night, if you like. My time is all my own just now. By the way, who is Mr. Trefalden's banker?”

He put out his hand for the cheque as he said this, and Colonna could not do otherwise than pass it to him. After examining it for some moments in silence, he gave it back, and said:—

“Are those his figures, Signor Colonna? I see they are not yours.”

To which the Italian replied very composedly,

“No, they are Olimpia’s.”

Major Vaughan rose, and walked over to the window.

“I shall ask Bertaldi to give me something to do when I am out there,” he said, after a brief pause. “I have had no fighting since I came back from India, and I am tired to death of this do-nothing life.”

“Bertaldi will be only too glad,” replied Colonna. “One experienced officer is worth more to us now than a squadron of recruits.”

The dragoon sighed impatiently, and pulled at the ends of his moustache. It was a habit he had when he was ill at ease.

“I’m sorry for Castletowers,” he said, presently. “He’d give his right hand to go over with me, and have a shot at the Neapolitans.”

"I know he would; but it cannot be—it must not be. I would not countenance his going for the world," replied the Italian, quickly. "It would break his mother's heart."

"It never entered into the sphere of my calculations that Lady Castletowers had a heart," said Major Vaughan. "But you have enjoyed the advantage of her acquaintance longer than I have, so I defer to your better judgment."

At this moment the door opened, and the Earl came in alone.

"I can't find Trefalden, anywhere," said he. "I have looked for him all over the house, in the stables, and all through the gardens. He was last seen on the terrace, talking to Miss Colonna, and nobody knows what has become of him since."

"He's somewhere in the park, of course," said Colonna.

"I don't think so. I met my mother as I came in. She has been wandering about the park all the morning, and has not seen him."

"If I were you, Castletowers, I'd have the Slane dragged," said Major Vaughan, with a

short, hard laugh. "He has repented of that cheque, and drowned himself in a paroxysm of despair."

"What nonsense!" said Colonna, almost angrily; but he thought it odd, for all that, and so did the Earl.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MAUSOLEUM.

THERE was a very curious object in Castle-towers-park, the shape of which was like a watchman's lanthorn, and the material grey granite. It stood on a little eminence in a retired corner of the domain, was approached by a double row of dwarf cypresses about three feet and a half in height, and enshrined the last mortal remains of a favourite hunter belonging to the late Earl. It was called "the mausoleum."

A more hopelessly ugly edifice it would be difficult to conceive; but the late Earl had intended it to be a model of elegant simplicity, and had wasted some hundreds upon it. Being abroad when his old horse died, he scrawled a rough outline of the Temple of Vesta on a sheet of foreign note-paper, and sent it up to his

steward, with instructions to hand it over for execution to a Guildford stonemason. But the Earl was no draughtsman, and the stonemason, who had never heard of the Temple of Vesta in his life, was no genius; and thus it happened that the park at Castletowers came to be disfigured by an architectural phenomenon compared with which the toll-houses on Waterloo Bridge were chaste and classic structures. The Earl, however, died at Naples, in happy ignorance of the deed that had been done, and his successor had not thought it worth while to pull the building down.

When Saxon rose from his seat under the great oak, it was yet so early that he was tempted to prolong his walk. So he went rambling on among the ferns, watching the rabbits and thinking of Miss Colonna, till he found himself, quite suddenly, at the foot of the little eminence on which the mausoleum was built.

It so happened that, although he had been more than ten days at Castletowers, he had never before strayed into this particular corner of the park. The phenomenon was consequently a

novelty in his eyes, and he walked round it wonderingly, contemplating its ugliness from every side. He then went up and tried the door, which was painted to look like green bronze, and studded all over with great sexagonal bosses. It swung back, however, quite easily, and Saxon walked in.

The place was so dark, and the day outside was so brilliant, that for the first few moments he could see nothing distinctly. At length a dumpy pillar on a massive square base came into view in the centre of the building, and Saxon saw by the inscription carved upon it (in very indifferent Latin) that the object of all this costly deformity was a horse. And then he sat down on the base of the column, and contemplated the mausoleum from within.

It was, if possible, uglier inside than outside; that is to say, the resemblance to a lanthorn was more perfect. The dumpy column looked exactly like a gigantic candle, and the very walls were panelled in granite in a way that suggested glass to the least imaginative observer. Had the stonemason possessed but a single grain of original

genius, he would have added a fine bold handle in solid granite to the outside, and made the thing complete.

While Saxon was thinking thus, and lazily criticising the late Earl's Latin, he suddenly became aware of a lady coming slowly up between the cypresses.

He thought at first that the lady was Miss Colonna, and was on the point of stepping out to meet her; but in almost the same instant he saw that she was a stranger. She was looking down as she walked, with her face so bowed that he could not see her features distinctly; but her figure was more girlish than Miss Colonna's, and her step more timid and hesitating. She seemed almost as if she were counting the daisies in the grass as she came along.

Saxon scarcely knew what to do. He had risen from his seat, and now stood a little way back in the deep shadow of the mausoleum. While he was yet hesitating whether to come forward or remain where he was, the young lady paused and looked round, as if expecting some one.

She had no sooner lifted up her face than Saxon remembered to have seen it before. He could not for his life tell when or where; but he was as confident of the fact as if every circumstance connected with it were fresh in his memory.

She was very fair of complexion, with soft brown hair, and large childlike brown eyes—eyes with just that sort of startled, pathetic expression about them which one sees in the eyes of a caged chamois. Saxon remembered even that look in them—remembered how that image of the caged chamois had presented itself to him when he saw them first—and then, all at once, there flashed upon him the picture of a railway station, an empty train, and a group of three persons standing beside the open door of a second-class carriage.

Yes; he recollected all about it now, even to the amount he had paid for her fare, and the fact that the lost ticket had been taken from Sedgebrook Station. Involuntarily, he drew back still further into the gloom of the mausoleum. He would not have shown himself, or have put him-

self in the way of being thanked, or paid, for the world.

Then she sighed, as if she were weary or disappointed, and came a few steps nearer; and as she continued to advance, Saxon continued to retreat, till she was nearly at the door of the mausoleum, and he had got quite round behind the pillar. It was like a scene upon a stage; only that in this instance the actors were improvising their parts, and there were no spectators to see them.

Just as he was speculating upon what he should do if she came in, and asking himself whether it would not be better, even now, to walk boldly out and risk the chances of recognition, the young lady decided the question for him by sitting down on the threshold of the building.

Saxon was out of his perplexity now. He was a prisoner, it was true; but his time was all his own, and he could afford to waste it in peeping from behind a pillar at the back of a young lady's bonnet. Besides, there was an air of adventure

about the proceeding that was quite delightful, as far as it went.

So he kept very quiet, scarcely daring to breathe for fear of alarming her, and amused himself by conjecturing what imaginable business could bring Miss Rivière of Camberwell to this particular corner of Castletowers Park. Was it possible, for instance, that the Earl had been insane enough to have the phenomenon photographed, and was she about to colour the photograph on the spot? The idea was too monstrous to be entertained for a moment? And then the young lady sighed again—such a deep-drawn, tremulous, melancholy sigh, that Saxon's heart ached to hear it.

It was no sigh of mere fatigue. Unlearned as he was in man and womankind, he knew at once that such a sigh could only come from a heart heavily laden. And so he fell to wondering what her trouble could be, and whether he could help, in any anonymous way, to lighten it for her. What if he sent her a hundred-pound note in a blank envelope? She looked poor, and even if——

But at this point his meditations were broken in upon. A shadow darkened the doorway; Miss Rivière rose from her seat upon the threshold; and Lady Castletowers stood suddenly before Saxon's astonished eyes.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT SAXON HEARD IN THE MAUSOLEUM.

LADY CASTLETOWERS was the first to speak; and her voice, when she spoke, was measured and haughty.

“You have requested to see me again, Miss Rivière,” she said.

“I have been compelled to do so,” was the almost inaudible reply.

“And I have come here at your request.”

Lady Castletowers paused, as if for some acknowledgment of her condescension in having done so; but no acknowledgment came.

“I must, however, beg you to understand quite distinctly that it is for the last time,” she said, presently. “It is impossible that I should hold any further communication with you other-

wise than by letter, and then only at stated periods, as heretofore."

The young lady murmured something of which Saxon could not distinguish a syllable.

"Then you will oblige me by saying it at once, and as briefly as possible," replied Lady Castletowers.

Saxon felt very uncomfortable. He knew that he ought not to be there. He knew this to be a strictly private conversation, and was quite aware that he ought not to overhear it; and yet what was he to do? He could still walk out, it was true, and explain his involuntary imprisonment; but he had an instinctive feeling that Lady Castletowers would not have come to meet Miss Rivière in the park if she had not wished to keep the meeting secret, and that his presence there, however well he might apologise for it, would cause her ladyship a very disagreeable surprise. Or he might stop his ears, and so be, virtually, as far away as in his London chambers; but then he felt certain that this young girl whom he had assisted once before, was now in some great trouble, and he longed to know what that trouble

was, that he might assist her again. So, as these thoughts flashed through his mind, Saxon concluded to stay where he was, and not to stop his ears—at least for the present.

Lady Castletowers had requested Miss Rivière to state her business at once, and also to state it briefly ; but it seemed as if the task were strangely difficult, for the girl still hesitated.

At length she said, with a kind of sob :—

“ Lady Castletowers, my mother is very ill.”

And then Saxon could see that she was weeping.

“ Do you mean that your mother is dying ? ” asked the Countess, coldly.

“ No ; but that she must die, if the necessary means are not taken to save her.”

“ What do you mean by the necessary means ? ”

“ Doctor Fisher says that she must go to some place on the Italian coast—to Nice, or Mentone,” replied the girl, making a great effort to steady her voice and keep her tears from falling. “ He thinks she may live there for years, with care and proper treatment ; but . . . ”

“Why not here, with care and proper treatment?” said Lady Castletowers.

“He says this variable climate is killing her—that she is dying day by day, as long as she remains in it.”

“It is her native climate,” said Lady Castletowers.

“Yes—but she was so young when she left it; and she has lived so many, many years of her life abroad.”

“Well?”

The girl lifted up her face, all pale and tearful as it was, and looked at her—just looked at her—but said never a word. It was not an indignant look—nor an imploring look—nor even a reproachful look; but it was, at all events, a look that Lady Castletowers seemed to understand, for she replied to it, and the reply, though spoken as haughtily as ever, had in it something of the nature of an apology.

“You are aware,” she said, “that your mother’s annuity is paid out of my own private means, and without my son’s knowledge. And my private means are very small—so small, that I find it

difficult to meet even this obligation, inconsiderable as it is."

"But you will not let her die, Lady Castletowers! You cannot—you will not let her die!"

And the young girl wrung her hands together in the passionate earnestness of her appeal.

Lady Castletowers looked down, and seemed as if she were tracing patterns on the turf with the end of her parasol.

"What sum do you require?" she said, slowly.

"Doctor Fisher said about thirty pounds——"

"Impossible! I will try to give you twenty pounds for this purpose: in fact, I will promise you twenty pounds; but I cannot do more."

Miss Rivière was about to speak; but the Countess slightly raised her hand, and checked the words upon her lips.

"The annuity," she said, "shall be paid, as usual, into the hands of whatever foreign banker you may indicate; but I beg you both to understand that I must be troubled with no more applications of this kind."

The girl's cheek glowed with sudden indignation.

“ You will be troubled with none, madam,” she said. “ Had there been any other person in the world to whom I could have applied for aid, I should not have claimed your assistance now.”

Her eye dilated and her lip trembled, and she said it firmly and proudly—as proudly as Lady Castletowers herself might have done. But the Countess passed her as if she had not spoken, and swept down the little avenue of cypresses, without taking any further notice of her presence.

Miss Rivière continued to stand in the same proud attitude till the last gleam of her ladyship’s silken skirts had disappeared among the trees. And then her strength suddenly gave way, and she sat down again upon the gloomy threshold, and sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ART OF SELLING OUT.

It was no wonder that Saxon could not be found when he was wanted, or that it was late before he returned to the house. His imprisonment lasted altogether more than an hour; and when Miss Rivière at length rose and went away, he took a long walk round in another direction, in order that he might be able to account for his absence.

He had no sooner made his appearance, however, in the drawing-room, than the Earl carried him off to Signor Colonna's study, and there left him. The Italian met him with outstretched hands; and Olimpia, who was writing busily, looked up and smiled as he came in.

"What am I to say to you, Mr. Trefalden?" exclaimed Colonna. "How shall I thank you?"

"Pray don't mention it," said Saxon, shyly.

"How can I help mentioning it? An act of such munificence . . ."

"I should be so much obliged to you," interrupted Saxon, "if you would say nothing about it."

"You may compel me to silence, Mr. Trefalden; but every true heart in Italy will thank you."

"I hope not, because I don't deserve it. I did it to—to please Miss Colonna."

"Then I hope that you at least permitted her to thank you as you deserve to be thanked, Mr. Trefalden," said the Italian, as he glanced smilingly from the one to the other. "And now will you pardon me if I ask you a question?"

"I shall be happy to answer a thousand."

"You have given us your cheque for a very large sum," said Colonna, taking the paper from his desk, and glancing at it as he spoke. "For so large a sum, that I have almost doubted whether your banker will cash it on presentation. It is unusual, at all events, for even millionnaires like yourself, Mr. Trefalden, to keep

so many loose thousands at their banker's. May I ask if you have given this a thought?"

Saxon stared hard at the cheque across the table, and wondered whether Olimpia had really doubled it or not; but the slope of the desk prevented him from seeing the figures distinctly.

"I have thought of it," he replied, with a troubled look, "and—and I am really afraid——"

"That your balance will be found insufficient to cover it," added Colonna, entering a brief memorandum on the margin of the cheque. "It is fortunate that I asked the question."

"I am very sorry," stammered Saxon.

"Why so? It is a matter of no importance."

"I was afraid . . ."

"I do not know, of course, how your money is placed," said Signor Colonna, "but I should suppose you will have no difficulty in transferring to Drummond's whatever amount may be necessary."

"It's in Government stock—that is, a great part of it," replied Saxon, mindful of the New Overland Route Railway and Steam Packet Company, Limited.

"Oh, then you will only have to sell out. Nothing easier."

Nothing easier, indeed! Poor Saxon!

"You may have to go up to town, however," added Colonna. "By the way, who is your stockbroker?"

But Saxon did not even know what a stockbroker was.

"My cousin manages my money for me," said he; "I must go to him about it."

"Mr. Trefalden of Chancery Lane?"

"Yes."

Signor Colonna and his daughter exchanged glances.

"I do not see that you need trouble your cousin this time," said the Italian, after a moment's hesitation.

"Why not?"

"Because a lawyer has nothing to do with the transfer of stock. He can only employ a stockbroker for you; and why should you not employ a stockbroker for yourself? It is more simple."

"I don't think my cousin William would like it," said Saxon, hesitatingly.

"Pray pardon me, but is it well that you should defer so much to his opinion? Might it not lead him to think himself privileged to establish some sort of censorship over your actions?"

Saxon was silent. He knew that his cousin had already established that censorship, and that he had submitted to it. But he did not feel inclined to acknowledge it.

"The present," said Signor Colonna, "is a case in point. Your cousin is no hearty friend to our cause. He never gave sixpence to Italy in his life, and he will surely regard this noble gift of yours from an adverse point of view. Why then place the matter before him? If he disapproved you would not withdraw your donation . . ."

"Of course not!" exclaimed Saxon, hastily.

"And you would offend him if you persisted. Be advised by me, my dear Mr. Trefalden, and act for yourself."

"But I don't know how to act for myself," said Saxon.

"I will put you in the way of all that. I will introduce you to my friend, Signor Nazzari, of

Austin Friars. He is an Italian Jew—a stock-broker by profession—and worthy of whatever confidence you may be disposed to place in him.”

Saxon thanked him, but his mind was ill at ease, and his face betrayed it. He was sorely tempted by Signor Colonna’s proposition. He shrunk from telling his cousin what he had done, and he knew that William Trefalden would be ten times more annoyed than he was by the Greatorrex transaction; but, on the other hand, he abhorred deceit and double-dealing.

“But won’t it seem like a want of confidence in William?” he said, presently. “I won’t do what’s underhand, you know. I’d endure anything sooner.”

Signor Colonna, who had been writing his countryman’s address on a slip of paper, looked up at this and laid his pen aside.

“My dear sir,” he said, “I but advise you to do as other gentlemen do in your position. No lawyer does stockbroker’s work.”

“That may be, and yet . . .”

“You might as reasonably send for your

lawyer if you were ill. He could but call in a physician to cure you, as he would now call in a stockbroker to sell your stock."

"I wish I knew what I ought to do!" ejaculated Saxon.

The Italian glanced impatiently towards his daughter; but Olimpia went on writing, and would not look up. She knew quite well that her father wanted her to throw in the weight of her influence, but she had resolved to say nothing. The great work was hers to do, and she had done it; but she would not stoop to the less. So Colonna went back, unaided, to the charge, and argued till Saxon was, if not convinced, at least persuaded.

And then it was arranged that Saxon and Vaughan should go up to town together on the following day—the millionaire to sell out his money, and the dragoon to dispose of it as Signor Colonna might direct.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT HAPPENED THE EVENING BEFORE.

THE morning was cold and grey, quite unlike the glowing golden mornings by which it had been preceded for the last fortnight, as Saxon Trefalden and Major Vaughan sped up to London by the fast train that left Sedgebrook station at 9.45.

They were alone in the compartment, sitting silently face to face, each busy with his own thoughts. The landscape was dull outside. A low mist shrouded the pleasant Surrey hills, the steam hung in the damp air for a quarter of a mile behind the flying train, and the plummy elms that came in places almost to the verge of the line, looked ghost-like and shadowy. It was such a day as French authors love to describe when they write of England and the English—a day

when the air is heavy and the sky is grey, and Sir Smith (young, rich, handsome, but devoured with the spleen) goes out and cuts his throat on Primrose Hill.

Dreary as the day was, however, these two travellers were no less dreary. Saxon's thoughts were troubled enough, and Vaughan's were all gloom and bitterness. As he sat there, knitting his brows, gnawing the ends of his long moustache, and staring down at the mat between his feet, he was going over something that happened the evening before in Lady Castletowers' drawing-room—going over it, word for word, look for look, just as it happened—going over it for the hundredth time, and biting it into his memory deeper and sharper with every repetition.

This was what it was, and how it happened.

Dinner was over, coffee had been handed round, and Major Vaughan had made his way to a quiet corner under a lamp, where Olympia sat reading. He remembered quite well how the light fell on her face from above, and how she looked up with a pleasant smile as he sat down beside her.

They fell into conversation. He asked first if he might be forgiven for disturbing her, and then if she had any commands for Italy. To which she replied that her only commands concerned himself; that he should fight bravely, as indeed she had no need to tell so daring a soldier, and come back safe when the cause was won. Whereupon, the thing that he had resolved never to say rose all at once to his lips, and he asked if there would be any hope for him when this had come to pass.

"Hope?" she repeated. "Hope for what, Major Vaughan?"

And then, in a few strong, earnest words, he told her how he loved her, and how, to win her, he would endure and dare all things; but she, looking at him with a sort of sad surprise, replied that it could never be.

He had never dreamed that it could be. He had told himself a thousand times that he was mad to love her; that he should be ten times more mad to declare his love; and yet, now that the words were spoken, he could not bring himself to believe that they had been spoken in vain.

So, with an eager trembling of the voice that he could not control, though he strove hard to do so, he asked if time would make no difference; and she answered, very gently and sadly, but very firmly—"None."

None! He remembered the very tone in which she said it—the dropping of her voice at the close of the word—the sigh that followed it. He remembered, also, how he sat looking at her hands as they rested, lightly clasped together, on the volume in her lap—how white and slender they showed against the purple binding—and how, when all was said, he longed to take them in his own, and kiss them once at parting. Well; it was said, and done, and over now—all over!

And then he looked out into the grey mists, and thought of Italy and the stirring life before him. He had never cared much for the "cause," and he now cared for it less than ever. Olimpia's eyes had been the "cause" to him; and, like many another, he had attached himself to it for her sake alone. But that mattered little now. He needed excitement; and any cause for which

there was work to be done and danger to be encountered, would have been welcome to him.

In the meanwhile, Saxon, sitting in the opposite corner, had his own troubles to think about. He was not at all satisfied with himself, in the first place, for the part he was playing towards his cousin. He could not divest himself of the idea that he was doing something "underhand;" and that idea was intolerable to him. In the second place, he was not quite comfortable with regard to Miss Colonna. He had not begun exactly to question himself about the nature of his admiration for her, or even to speculate upon the probable results of that admiration; but he had become suddenly aware of the extent of her power, and was startled at finding to what lengths he might be carried by his desire to please her. William Trefalden had said that she was capable of asking him to take the command of a troop; but a vague consciousness of how Olimpia was capable of asking him to do a great deal more than that, had dawned by this time upon Saxon's apprehension.

And then, besides all this, he could not help thinking of his adventure in the mausoleum, and of the strange interview that he had involuntarily witnessed between Lady Castletowers and Miss Rivière. The girl's sorrowful young face haunted him. He wanted to help her; and he wanted advice as to the best way of helping her. Above all, he wanted to penetrate the mystery of her claim on Lady Castletowers. He would have given anything to have been able to talk these things over with the Earl; but that, after what he had heard, was, of course, impossible. So he pondered and puzzled, and at last made up his mind that he would consult his cousin on the subject while he was up in town.

Thus, absorbed each in his own thoughts, the two men sped on, face to face, without exchanging a syllable. They might probably have continued their journey in silence to the end, if, somewhere about half-way between Sedgebrook station and Waterloo-bridge, Saxon had not chanced to look up and find his companion's eyes fixed gloomily upon him.

"Well," said he, with a surprised laugh, "why

do you look at me in that portentous way? What have I done?"

"Nothing particularly useful that I am aware of, my dear fellow," replied the dragoon. "The question is not what you *have* done, but what you *may* do. I was wondering whether you mean to follow my example?"

"In what respect?"

"In respect of Italy, of course. Are you intending to join Garibaldi's army?"

"No—that is, I have not thought about it," replied Saxon. "Is Castletowers going?"

"I should think not. His mother would never consent to it."

"If he went, I would go," said Saxon, after a moment's pause. "There's camp-life to see, I suppose; and fighting to be done?"

"Fighting, yes; but as to the camp life, I can tell you nothing about that. I fancy the work out there will be rough enough for some time to come."

"I shouldn't mind how rough it was," said Saxon, his imagination warming rapidly to this new idea.

"How would you like to march a whole day without food, sleep on the bare ground in a soaking rain, with only a knapsack under your head, and get up at dawn to fight a battle before breakfast?" asked Vaughan.

"I should like it no better than others, I dare say," laughed the young man; "but I shouldn't mind trying it. I wish Castletowers could go. We've been planning to make a tour together by-and-by; but a Sicilian campaign would be a hundred times better."

"If he were as free as yourself, Castletowers would be off with me to-morrow morning," said Vaughan; and then his brow darkened again as he remembered how, not only Saxon, whom he suspected of admiring Olimpia Colonna, but the Earl, of whose admiration he had no doubt whatever, would both remain behind, free to woo or win her, if they could, when he was far away.

It was not a pleasant reflection, and at that moment the rejected lover felt that he hated them both, cordially.

"Which route do you take?" asked Saxon,

all unconscious of what was passing in his companion's mind.

"The most direct, of course—Dover, Calais, and Marseilles. I shall be in Genoa by eight or nine o'clock on Sunday evening."

"And I at Castletowers."

"How is that?" said Vaughan, sharply, "I thought you said your time was up yesterday?"

"So it was; but Castletowers has insisted that I shall prolong my visit by another week, and so I go back this evening. How we shall miss you at dinner!"

But to this civility the Major responded only by a growl.

CHAPTER XXII.

WILLIAM TREFALDEN EXPLAINS THE THEORY OF LEGAL FICTIONS.

SIGNOR NAZZARI was a tall, spare, spider-like Italian, who exercised the calling of a stock and share broker, and rented a tiny office under a dark arch in the midst of that curious web of passages known as Austin Friars. He had been prepared for Saxon's visit by a note from Colonna, and met him in a tremor of voluble servility, punctuating his conversation with bows, and all but prostrating himself in the dust of his office. Flies were not plentiful in Signor Nazzari's web, and such a golden fly as Saxon was not meshed every day.

It was surprising what a short time the transaction took. Colonna might well say nothing was easier. First of all they went to the Bank of England, where Saxon signed his name in a

great book, after which they returned to Austin Friars and waited while Signor Nazzari went somewhere to fetch the money; and then he came back with a pocket-book full of bank notes secured round his neck by a steel chain—and the thing was done.

Thereupon Major Vaughan solemnly tore up Saxon's cheque in the stockbroker's presence, and received the value thereof in crisp new Bank of England paper.

"And now, Trefalden," said he, "fare you well till we meet in Italy."

"I've not made up my mind yet, remember," replied Saxon, smiling.

"Make it up at once, and go with me in the morning."

"No, no; that is out of the question."

"Well, at all events don't put it off till the fun is all over. If you come, come while there's something to be done."

"Trust me for that," replied Saxon, with a somewhat heightened colour. "I won't share the feasting if I haven't shared the fighting. Good-by."

“ Good-by.”

And with this, having traversed together the mazes of Austin Friars and emerged upon the great space in front of the Exchange, they shook hands and parted.

Saxon turned his face westward, and went down Cheapside on foot. He was going to Chancery Lane, but he was in no hurry to reach his destination. He walked slowly, paused every now and then to look in a shop window, and took a turn round St. Paul's. He pretended to himself that he went in to glance at Nelson's monument ; but he had seen Nelson's monument twice before, and he knew in his heart that he cared very little about it. At length inexorable fate brought him to his cousin's door ; so he went up the dingy stairs, feeling very guilty, and hoping not to find the lawyer at home. On the first landing he met Mr. Keckwitch with his hat on. It was just one o'clock, and that respectable man was going to his dinner.

“ Mr. Trefalden is engaged, sir, with a client,” said the head-clerk, to Saxon's immense relief.

“ Oh, then you can say that I called, if you

please," replied he, turning about with great alacrity.

"But I think the gentleman will be going directly, sir, if you wouldn't mind taking a seat in the office," added Mr. Keckwitch.

"I—perhaps I had better try to come by-and-by," said Saxon, reluctantly.

"As you please, sir, but I'm confident you wouldn't have to wait five minutes."

So Saxon resigned himself to circumstances, and waited.

The clerks were all gone to dinner, and for a few minutes he had the place to himself. Presently the door of William Trefalden's private room was partly opened—

"Then you will write to me, if you please," said a deep voice; but the owner of the voice, who seemed to be holding the door on the other side, remained out of sight.

"You may expect to hear from me, Mr. Behrens, the day after to-morrow," replied the lawyer.

"And Lord Castletowers quite understands that the mortgage money *must* be forthcoming by the appointed day?"

"I have informed him so."

"*Must*, Mr. Trefalden. Remember that. I can allow no grace. Twenty thousand of the money will have to go direct to the Worcester-shire agent, as you know; and the odd five will be wanted for repairs, building, and so forth. It's imperative—quite imperative."

"I am fully aware of your necessity for the money, Mr. Behrens," was the reply, uttered in William Trefalden's quietest tone; "and I have duly impressed that fact upon his lordship. I have no doubt that you will be promptly paid."

"Well, I hope so, for his sake. Good morning, Mr. Trefalden."

"Good morning."

And with this Mr. Behrens came out into the office, followed by the lawyer, who almost started at sight of his cousin.

"You here, Saxon?" he said, having seen his client to the top of the stairs. "I thought you were at Castletowers."

It would have taken a keener observer than Saxon to discover that the wish was father to

Mr. Trefalden's thought; but there was no doubt of the relationship.

"Well, so I am, in one sense," replied the young man. "I'm only in town for the day."

"And what brings you to town only for the day? Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Oh, no—nothing at all. I—that is you——"

And Saxon, unpractised in the art of equivocation, floundered helplessly about in search of a reason that should be true, and yet not the truth.

"You want to consult me about something, I suppose," said the lawyer, observant of his perplexity. "Come into my room, and tell me all about it."

So they went into the private room, and William Trefalden closed the double doors.

"First of all, Saxon," said he, laying his hand impressively on the young man's shoulder, "I must ask you a question. You saw that client of mine just now, and you heard him allude to certain matters of business as he went out?"

"I did," replied Saxon; "and I was sorry . . ."

“One moment, if you please. You heard him mention the name of Lord Castletowers?”

“Yes.”

“Then I must request you on no account to mention that circumstance to the Earl. It is a matter in which he is not concerned, and of which there is no need to inform him.”

“But it seemed to me that he owed twenty-five thousand . . .”

William Trefalden smiled and shook his head.

“No, no,” said he. “Nothing of the kind. It is a simple transfer of capital—a private transaction, in which the Earl’s name has been incidentally used; but only his name. He has nothing to do with it, personally—nothing whatever.”

“But——”

“But you heard only the end of a conversation, my dear fellow, and you misunderstood the little you did hear. You understand that this is not to be repeated?”

“Yes—I understand,” replied Saxon, doubtfully.

“And I have your promise to observe my request?”

Saxon hesitated.

“I don’t doubt *you*, cousin William,” he said, bluntly; “though, of course, you know that without my telling you. But I don’t know how to doubt my own ears, either. I heard that big, cross-looking old fellow distinctly say that Castletowers must pay him twenty-five thousand pounds by the tenth of next month. What can that mean, if not . . .”

“Listen to me for three minutes, Saxon,” interrupted Mr. Trefalden, good-humouredly. “You have heard of such things as legal fictions?”

“Yes; but I don’t understand what they are.”

“Well, legal fictions are legally defined as ‘things that have no real essence in their own body, but are acknowledged and accepted in law for some especial purpose.’ ”

“I don’t understand that either.”

“I should be surprised if you did,” replied his cousin, with a pleasant smile; “but I will try to explain it to you. In law, as in other things, my

dear fellow, we are occasionally glad to adopt some sort of harmless hypothesis in order to arrive at conclusions which would otherwise cost more time and trouble than they are worth. Thus, when a legal contract is made at sea, the deed is dated from London, or Birmingham, or any inland place, in order to draw what is called the cognisance of the suit from the Court of Admiralty to the Courts of Westminster. Again, a plaintiff who brings an action into the Court of Exchequer fictitiously alleges himself to be the Queen's debtor. He is not the Queen's debtor. He owes the Queen no more than you owe her; but he must make use of that expedient to bring himself under the jurisdiction of that particular court."

"What intolerable nonsense!" exclaimed Saxon.

"One more instance. Till within the last eight years or so, the law of ejectment was founded on a tissue of legal fictions, in which an imaginary man called John Doe lodged a complaint against another imaginary man called Richard Roe, neither of whom ever existed in

any mortal form whatever. What do you say to that?"

"I say, cousin, that if I were a lawyer, I should be ashamed of a system made up of lies like that!" replied Saxon.

Mr. Trefalden flung himself into his arm-chair and laughed.

"I won't have you abuse our legal fictions in that way," he said. "These little things are the romance of law, and keep our imaginations from drying up."

"They ought not to be necessary," said Saxon, who could not see the amusing side of John Doe and Richard Roe.

"I grant you that. They have their origin, no doubt, in some defect of the law. But then we are not blessed with a Code Napoleon; and perhaps we should not like it, if we were. Such as our laws are, we must take them, and be thankful. They might be a great deal worse, depend on it."

"Then is it a legal fiction that Castletowers owes Mr. Behrens twenty-five thousand pounds?" asked Saxon.

William Trefalden winced. He had hoped that the woolstapler's name would have escaped Saxon's observation ; but it had done nothing of the kind. Saxon remembered every word clearly enough—names, dates, amount of money, and all.

"Precisely," replied the lawyer. "Lord Castletowers no more owes Mr. Behrens twenty-five thousand pounds than you do. He would be a ruined man at this moment, Saxon, if he did."

"He does not behave like a ruined man," said Saxon.

"Of course not. He would not be filling his house with guests and giving balls, if he were. So now all's explained, and I have your promise."

Saxon looked earnestly in his cousin's face. He fancied that no man could look another in the face and tell a lie. Many persons entertain that belief ; but a more mistaken notion does not exist. Your practised liar makes a point of staring into his hearer's eyes, and trusts to that very point for half the effect of his lie. But Saxon would not have believed this had an angel told him so. Therefore he looked in his cousin's

face for evidence—and therefore, when William Trefalden gave him back his look with fearless candour, his doubts were at once dispelled, and he promised unhesitatingly.

“That’s well,” said the lawyer. “And now, Saxon, sit down and tell me what you have come to say.”

“It’s a long story,” replied Saxon.

“I am used to hearing long stories.”

“But I am not used to telling them; and I hardly know where to begin. It’s about a lady.”

“About a lady,” repeated William Trefalden; and Saxon could not but observe that his cousin’s voice was by no means indicative of satisfaction.

“In fact,” added the young man, hastily, “it’s about two or three ladies.”

Mr. Trefalden held up his hands.

“Two or three ladies!” said he. “How shocking! Is Miss Colonna one of them?”

“Oh, dear no!” replied Saxon, emphatically—perhaps a little too emphatically. And then he plunged into his story, beginning at his first

meeting with Miss Rivière at the Waterloo-bridge station, and ending with the adventure in the mausoleum.

Mr. Trefalden heard him to the end very patiently, putting in a question now and then, and piecing the facts together in his mind as they were brought before him. At length Saxon came to a pause, and said:—

“That’s all, cousin; and now I want you to tell me what I can do.”

“What do you want to do?” asked the lawyer.

“I want to help them, of course.”

“Well, you have the young lady’s address. Send her a cheque for fifty pounds.”

“She wouldn’t take it, if I did. No, no, cousin William, that’s not the way. It must be done much more cleverly. I want them to have money regularly — twice a year, you know — enough to keep her poor mother in Italy, and pay the doctor’s bills, and all that.”

“But this annuity from Lady Castletowers . . .”

“Lady Castletowers is as hard and cold as

marble," interrupted Saxon, indignantly. "*I* had rather starve than take a penny from her. If you had heard how grudgingly she promised that miserable twenty pounds!"

"I never supposed that her ladyship had a hand open as day, for melting charity," said Mr. Trefalden.

"Charity!" echoed Saxon.

"Besides, I doubt that it *is* charity. There must be some claim . . . Surely I have heard the name of Rivière in connection with the Wynnecliffes or the Pierreponts—and yet——Pshaw! if Keckwitch were here he could tell me in a moment!"

And Mr. Trefalden leaned back thoughtfully in his chair.

"I wish you could suggest a way by which I might do something for them," said Saxon. "I want them to get it, you see, without knowing where it comes from."

"That makes it difficult," said Mr. Trefalden.

"And yet it must not seem like almsgiving."

"More difficult still."

"I thought, if it were possible to give her

some sort of commission," said Saxon, doubtfully, "a commission for coloured photographs of the Italian coast, you know——would that do?"

"It is not a bad idea," replied the lawyer. "It might do, if skilfully carried out; but I think I hear Keckwitch in the office."

And then Mr. Trefalden went in search of his head clerk, leaving Saxon to amuse himself as well as he could with the dingy map and the still more dingy law books.

At the end of a long half-hour, he came back with a paper of memoranda in his hand.

"Well?" said Saxon, who was tired to death of his solitary imprisonment.

"Well; I believe I know all that is to be learned up to a certain point; and I have, at all events, found out who your railway heroine is. It's a somewhat romantic story, but you must sit down and listen patiently while I relate it."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A PAGE OF FAMILY HISTORY.

EVERY student of English history is familiar with the noble and ancient name of Holme-Pierrepoint. A more stately race of men and women than the bearers of that name never traversed the pages of mediæval chronicle. Their famous ancestor, Thierry de Pierrepoint, "came over," as the phrase is, with William the Bastard: but he was only the younger son of a younger son, and the houses which look back to him as their founder are, after all, but offshoots from that still more ancient line that held lands and titles in Franche Comté, three centuries before the great conquest.

How Thierry de Pierrepoint came to be lord of many a fair and fertile English manor; how

his descendants multiplied and prospered, held high offices of state under more than thirty sovereigns, raised up for themselves great names in camp and council, and intermarried with the bravest and fairest of almost every noble family in the land, needs no recapitulation here. Enough that the Holme-Pierreponts were an elder branch of the original Pierrepont stock; and that Lady Castletowers, whose father was a Holme-Pierrepont, and whose mother was a Talbot, had really some excuse for that inordinate pride of birth which underlaid every thought and act of her life, as the ground-colour underlies all the tints of a painting.

The circumstances of her ladyship's parentage were these:—

George Condé Holme-Pierrepont, third Lord Holmes, of Holme Castle, Lancashire, being no longer young, and having, moreover, encumbered a slender estate with many mortgages, married at fifty years of age, to the infinite annoyance of his cousin and heir-presumptive, Captain Holme-Pierrepont, of Sowerby. The lady of Lord Holmes's choice was just half his

age. She was known in Portsmouth and its neighbourhood as "the beautiful Miss Talbot;" she was the fifth of nine daughters in a family of fourteen children; and her father, the Honourable Charles Talbot, held the rank of Rear-Admiral in the Royal Navy. It is, perhaps, almost unnecessary to add that Miss Talbot had no fortune.

This marriage was celebrated some time in the summer of 1810; and in the month of October, 1811, after little more than one year of marriage, Lady Holmes died, leaving an infant daughter named Alethea Claude. Well-nigh broken-hearted, the widower shut himself up in Holme Castle, and led a life of profound seclusion. He received no visitors; he absented himself from his Parliamentary duties, and he was rarely seen beyond his own park gates. Then fantastic stories began to be told of his temper and habits. It was said that he gave way to sudden and unprovoked paroxysms of rage; that he had equally strange fits of silence; that he abhorred the light of day, and sat habitually with closed shutters and lighted

candles; that he occasionally did not go to bed for eight-and-forty hours at a time; and a hundred other tales, equally bizarre and improbable. At length, when the world had almost forgotten him, and his little girl was between four and five years of age, Lord Holmes astounded his neighbours, and more than astounded his heir, by marrying his daughter's governess.

How he came to take this step, whether he married the governess for her own sake, or for the child's sake, or to gratify a passing caprice, were facts known only to himself. That he did marry her, and that, having married her, he continued to live precisely the same eccentric, sullen life as before, was all that even his own servants could tell about the matter. The second Lady Holmes visited nowhere, and was visited by none. What she had been as Miss Holme-Pierrepont's governess, she continued to be as Miss Holme-Pierrepont's stepmother. She claimed no authority. She called her husband "my lord," stood in awe of her servants, and yielded to the child's imperious temper just

as she had done at the first. The result was that she remained a cypher in her own house, and was treated as a cypher. When, by-and-by, she also gave birth to a little daughter, there were no rejoicings; and when, some few years later, she died and was laid beside her high-born predecessor, there were no lamentations. Had she brought an heir to the house, or had she filled her place in it more bravely, things, perchance, had gone differently. But the world is terribly apt to take people at their own valuation; and Lady Holmes, perplexed

“ ——— with the burden of an honour
Unto which she was not born,”

had rated herself according to the dictates of one of the lowliest and most timid hearts that ever beat in a woman's breast.

Thus it was that Lord Holmes became the father of two daughters, and was twice a widower. And thus it was that Captain Holme-Pierrepoint of Sowerby remained heir-presumptive to his cousin's coronet after all.

No two girls ever grew up more unlike

each other than the Honourable Miss Holme-Pierreponts. There was a difference of nearly six years in their age to begin with ; but this was as nothing when compared with the difference in their appearance, dispositions, and tastes.

The elder was tall, stately, and remarkable from very early girlhood for that singular resemblance to Marie Antoinette, which became so striking in her at a later period of life. The younger, on the contrary, was pretty rather than beautiful, painfully sensitive and shy, and as unpretending as might have been the lowliest peasant girl upon her father's lands. Alethea never forgot that she was noble on both sides ; but Elizabeth seemed never to remember that she was noble on either. Alethea was cold and ambitious ; but Elizabeth's nature was as clinging and tender as it was unselfish. Elizabeth looked up to Alethea as to the noblest and most perfect of God's creatures ; but Alethea, who had never forgiven her father's second marriage, held her half-sister in that kind of modified estimation in which a jeweller might hold a

clouded diamond, or a sportsman a half-bred retriever.

Years went by; and as the girls grew to womanhood their unlikeness became more and more apparent. In due time, the Honourable Miss Holme-Pierrepont, being of an age to take her place in society, was presented at Court by her aunt, the Countess of Glastonbury, and "brought out" after the sober fashion that prevailed in the days of George the Third. Before the close of that season she was engaged to Harold Wynneclaffe, fourth Earl of Castletowers, and early in the spring-time of the following year, while her young sister was yet in the school-room, the beautiful Alethea was married from her aunt's house in Somersetshire, where the ceremony was privately performed by the Bishop of Bath and Wells.

In the meanwhile it was arranged that Lord Holmes' younger daughter was to be spared all those difficulties and dangers that beset a matrimonial choice. Her lot was cast for her. She was to marry Captain Holme-Pierrepont of Sowerby.

A more simple and admirable scheme could not have been devised. Captain Holme-Pierrepont was her father's heir, and it was of course desirable that Elizabeth's dowry should remain in the family. Then Elizabeth was very young— young even for her age—and her character needed to be judiciously formed. Captain Holme-Pierrepont was the very man to form a young lady's character. He was a man who got through a great deal of solid reading in the year; who delighted in statistics; who talked pompously, was a strict disciplinarian, and had "views" on the subject of education. In addition to these qualifications it may be added that Captain Holme-Pierrepont was still handsome, and only forty-eight years of age.

Incredible as it may seem, however, Lord Holmes' second daughter was by no means so happy as she ought to have been in the contemplation of her destiny. Like most very young girls she had already dreamt dreams, and she could not bring herself to accept Captain Holme-Pierrepont as the realisation of that ideal lover whom her imagination had delighted to picture.

Her loving nature sorely needed something to cling to, something to live for, something to worship; but she knew that she could not possibly live for, or cling to, or worship Captain Holme-Pierrepoint. Above all she shrunk from the prospect of having her character formed according to his educational "views."

In order, therefore, to avoid this terrible contingency, the younger Miss Holme-Pierrepoint deliberately rejected her destiny, and ran away with her drawing-master.

It was a frightful blow to the pride of the whole Pierrepoint family. The Talbots and the Wynnecliffes were of opinion that Lord Holmes was simply reaping what he had sown, and that nothing better was to be expected from the daughter of a nursery governess; but Lord Holmes himself regarded the matter in a very different light. Harsh and eccentric as he was, this old man had really loved his younger child, but now his whole heart hardened towards her, and he swore that he would never see her, or speak to her, or forgive her while he lived. Then, having formally disinherited her, he desired that

her name should be mentioned in his presence no more.

As for Lady Castletowers, her resentment was no less bitter. She, too, never saw or spoke to her half-sister again. She did not suffer, it is true, as her father suffered. Her heart was not wrung like his—probably because she had less heart to be wrung; but her pride was even more deeply outraged. Neither of them made any effort to recall the fugitive. They merely blotted her name from their family records; burned, unread, the letters in which she implored their forgiveness, and behaved in all respects, not as though she were dead, but as though she had never existed.

In the meanwhile, Elizabeth Holme-Pierrepont had fled to Italy with her husband. He was a very young man—a mere student—rich in hope, poor in pocket, and an enthusiast in all that concerned his art. But enthusiasm is as frequently the index of taste as the touchstone of talent; and Edgar Rivière, with all his exquisite feeling for form and colour, his worship of the antique, and his idolatry of Raffaele, lacked the one great

gift that makes poet and painter—he had no creative power. He was a correct draughtsman and a brilliant colourist; but, wanting “the vision and the faculty divine,” wanted just all that divides elegant mediocrity from genius. He believed in himself, however, and his wife believed in him; and for years he struggled on, painting ambitious pictures that never sold, and earning a scanty subsistence by copying the Raffaelles he so dearly loved. At last, however, the bitter truth forced itself upon him, and he knew that he had deceived himself with hopes destined never to be realised. But the discovery came too late. Long years of unrequited effort had impaired his health and bowed his spirit within him, and he had no spark left of that high courage which would once have armed him against all “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.” He did not long survive the wreck of his ambition. He died in Florence, literally of a broken heart, some fifteen years after his romantic marriage with Elizabeth Holme-Pierrepont, leaving her with one surviving child wholly unprovided for.

Such were the destinies of these half-sisters, and such the family history of which William Trefalden gave Saxon a meagre outline, after his consultation with Abel Keckwitch.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT THEY SAID AT THE CLUB.

“AND now, Saxon,” said Mr. Trefalden, “I can tell you nothing beyond the fact that Edgar Rivière died in Florence some three or four years since ; but I think we need have no difficulty in guessing the parentage and history of your distressed damsel. I imagine that her mother must have been left simply destitute ; and in this case, Lady Castletowers would, of course, do something to keep her from starvation. I doubt, however, that her charity went beyond that point.”

“But, good Heavens !” exclaimed Saxon, who was now pacing up and down the room in a fever of indignation, “this lady is her own sister, cousin William ! her own sister !”

“Her half-sister ; but even so, it is too bad.”

"Too bad? Why, it's monstrous! If I were Castletowers"

"I do not suppose that Lord Castletowers has ever heard of the existence of these people," interrupted the lawyer.

"Then he ought to hear of it!"

"Not from your lips, young man. You have stumbled on a family secret, and, right or wrong, you are bound in honour to keep it. If Lady Castletowers keeps a skeleton in her private closet, it is not your place to produce that skeleton at the feast to which she invites you."

"I am afraid that's true," replied Saxon; "but I wish I might tell Castletowers all the same."

"You must do nothing of the kind," said Mr. Trefalden, emphatically. "It is in your power to give great assistance to two unfortunate ladies, and with that privilege be content."

"I cannot be content to stand by and see injustice done," exclaimed Saxon. "They have been cruelly wronged."

"Even so, my dear fellow, you are not Don Quixote."

The young man bit his li

“Don Quixote’s name,” said he, “is too often taken in vain. Heaven forbid that we nineteenth-century people should come to apply it to the simple love of right! It seems to me that the world over here thinks a vast deal more of politeness than justice. It’s not so in Switzerland. And now, cousin William, how am I to help them?”

“You must allow me time to consider,” replied Mr. Trefalden. “It will require delicate management.”

“I know it will.”

“But I can think the matter over, and write to you about it to-morrow.”

“The sooner the better,” said Saxon.

“Of course—and with regard to money?”

“With regard to money, do the best you can for them. I don’t care how much it is.”

“Suppose I were to draw upon you for a hundred thousand pounds!” said the lawyer, with a smile.

“I’m not afraid of that; but I do fear that you may not use my purse freely enough.”

“I will try, at all events,” replied Mr. Tre-

falden ; whereupon Saxon thanked him cordially, and put out his hand to say good-by.

“ You don’t inquire how the company is going on,” said the lawyer, detaining him.

“ I am afraid I had forgotten all about the company,” laughed Saxon. “ But I suppose it’s all right.”

“ Yes, we are making way,” replied his cousin. “ Capital pours in, and the shareholders have every confidence in the direction. Our deputation is still at Teheran ; and we are this week despatching one of our directors to Sidon. Sidon, you may remember, will be our great Mediterranean depôt ; and we mean to establish immense engineering works there, without delay.”

“ Indeed ! ” said Saxon. “ Is it still so great a secret ? ”

“ It is a greater secret than ever.”

“ Oh—good-by.”

“ You are always in haste when business is the topic,” said Mr. Trefalden. “ Where are you going now ? ”

“ To the club ; and then back to Castletowers.”

“You are making a long stay. What about the Colonnas?”

But Saxon was already half-way down the stairs, and seemed not to hear the question.

He then went direct to the Erectheum, where he no sooner made his appearance than he found himself a centre of attraction. The younger men were eager for news of Italy, and, knowing whence he came, overwhelmed him with questions. What was Colonna doing? Was he likely to go out to Garibaldi? What were Garibaldi's intentions? Was Victor Emmanuel favourable to the Sicilian cause? Would the war be carried into Naples and Rome? And, if so, did Colonna think that the Emperor of the French would take arms for the Pope? Was it true that Vaughan was about to join the army of liberation? Was it true that Lord Castletowers would command the English contingent? Was it true that Saxon had himself accepted a commission? And so on, till Saxon stopped his ears, and refused to hear another question.

“I am not in Signor Colonna's confidence,” said he, “and I know nothing of his projects.

But I do know that I have accepted no such commission, and I am sure I may say the same for Castletowers."

"And Vaughan?" said Sir Charles Burgoyne.

"Vaughan *is* going. He starts for Genoa to-night."

"I felt sure that was true," observed Greatorrex, with a significant laugh. "Perhaps the fair Olympia has promised to take pity on him."

Saxon turned upon him as if he had been stung.

"What do you mean?" he said, hotly. "What should Miss Colonna have to do with the matter?"

"Perhaps a great deal," replied the banker. "The gentleman gives his arm to the cause, and the lady rewards him with her hand. 'Tis a fair exchange."

"And Vaughan has worshipped for years at the Olympian shrine," added Sir Charles.

"Besides," said another, "what else does he go for? We all know that he doesn't care a straw for Italy. It may be a forlorn hope, you know."

“More likely than not, I should say,” replied Burgoyne. “Olimpia Colonna is a clever woman, and knows her own market value. She’ll fly at higher game than a major of dragoons.”

Saxon’s face was burning all this time with anger and mortification. At last he could keep silence no longer.

“All this may be true,” he said. “I don’t believe it is true; but at all events it is not in my power to contradict it. However, of one thing I am certain—that a crowded club-room is not the place in which a lady’s name should be passed from mouth to mouth in this fashion.”

“Your proposition is quite unexceptionable in a general way, my dear fellow,” replied Burgoyne; “but in the present instance it does not apply. When a lady’s name has figured for years in despatches, petitions, committee-lists, and reports of all kinds, civil and military, it can surely bear the atmosphere of a crowded club-room.”

“I don’t think that has anything to do with it,” said Saxon, sturdily. “Despatches and petitions are public matters, and open to general discussion.”

“ But the probable marriage of a charming woman is a private matter, and therefore open to particular discussion,” laughed the Guardsman. “ For my part, I can only say that I mean to hang myself on Miss Colonna’s wedding-day.”

Then the conversation turned to Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel again, and presently Saxon made his escape, and was on his way to the station.

He felt very moody and uncomfortable, as he leaned back in his Hansom and sped along the Strand. He had heard much that was infinitely disagreeable to him during the brief hour spent at his club ; much that he could not refute, and that he had been obliged to endure with comparative patience. That Olimpia’s name should be thus familiar to every idle lip seemed like a profanation ; but that it should be coupled up with that of Vaughan and Castletowers, and perhaps—who could tell?—with the names of a hundred other men whose political sympathies necessarily brought them into communication with her, was sacrilege *pur et simple*.

What man on earth was worthy of her, to

begin with? Certainly not Major Vaughan, with his surface morality, his half-concealed cynicism, and his iron-grey beard. Not even Castletowers, brave and honourable gentleman as he was. No—the only fit and appropriate husband for Olimpia Colonna would be some modern Du Guesclin or Bayard; some man of the old heroic type, whose soul would burn with a fire kindred to her own, who should do great deeds in the cause she loved, and lay his splendid laurels at her feet. But then, lived there such a hero, young, handsome, daring, ardent, successful in love and mighty in battle, a man of men, *sans peur et sans reproche*?

Perhaps Saxon was secretly comforted by the conviction that only a preux chevalier would be worthy of Miss Colonna, and that the preux chevalier was certainly not forthcoming.

In the midst of these reflections, however, he found himself once more at the station, with the express on the point of starting, and not a second to lose. To fling down his shillings, dash along the platform, and spring into a first-class carriage just as the guard was running along the line

and the driver beginning his preliminary whistle, was the work of a moment. As the door closed behind him and he dropped into the nearest corner, a friendly voice called him by name, and he found himself face to face with Miss Hatherton.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE PLATFORM.

"WELL met by—well, not exactly by moonlight, Mr. Trefalden," said she, with that hearty, almost gentlemanly, way of proffering her hand that always put Saxon so delightfully at his ease in her society. "Have you been shooting any more weathercocks, or winning any more races since I saw you last?"

"No," replied Saxon, laughingly; "I have been more usefully employed."

"I rejoice to hear it. May I ask in what manner?"

"Oh, Miss Hatherton, if you want particulars, I'm lost! I am only pleasantly conscious that I have been behaving well, and improving myself. I fear it's rather a vague statement to put forward, though."

“Terribly vague. At all events, you have not yet donned the red shirt?”

“The red shirt!” echoed Saxon, with an involuntary glance at the little blue horseshoes besprinkling the bosom of the garment in which his person happened to be arrayed. “What do you mean?”

“I mean that you have not gone over to Garibaldi.”

Garibaldi again! It seemed as if the air was full of the names of Garibaldi and Italy to-day!

“What, you too, Miss Hatherton?” he said. “I have heard more about the Italian affairs since I have been in town this morning than I ever hear at Castletowers. The men at the Erectheum would talk of nothing else.”

“I dare say not,” replied the heiress. “The lookers-on have always more to say than the workers. But has not Miss Colonna enlisted you?”

“Indeed, no.”

“You amaze me. I could not have believed that she would show such incredible forbearance

towards a man of your inches. But perhaps you are intending to join in any case."

"I have no intention, one way or the other," said Saxon; "but if any of our fellows were going, I should like to join them."

"There is nothing I should enjoy so much, if I were a man," said Miss Hatherton. "Do you know how the fund is going on? I heard they were sorely in want of money the other day, and I sent them something—not much, but as much as I could spare."

"Oh, I believe the fund is going on pretty well," replied Saxon, with some embarrassment.

"You are a subscriber, of course?"

"Yes—I have given something."

Miss Hatherton looked at him keenly.

"I should like to know what that something was," said she. "I heard a strange rumour to-day . . . but I suppose you would not tell me if I were to ask you?"

Saxon laughed, and shook his head.

"A rumour is generally nothing but a polite name for a falsehood," replied he. "You should never believe in one."

"Perhaps not," said Miss Hatherton, gravely.
"I should be sorry to believe all . . ."

She checked herself, and added :

"If you do go to Italy, Mr. Trefalden, you must be sure to let me know. I only marvel that Miss Colonna's eloquence has not been brought to bear upon you long since."

"Well, I'm not an Italian."

Miss Hatherton smiled compassionately.

"My dear sir," said she, "if you were a Thug, and willing to make your *roomal* useful to the cause, the Colonnas would enlist you. Nation is nothing to them. All they want is a volunteer or a subscriber. Besides, plenty of your countrymen have gone over the Alps already."

"Are you sure of that ?" asked Saxon.

"As sure as that you never read the papers."

"You are quite right there," laughed he. "I never do."

"An English volunteer company is already formed," continued Miss Hatherton, "at Genoa."

"Yes—I know that."

"There will also, I hear, be a German corps ; and both Swiss and Hungarian corps are talked about."

Saxon nearly bounded off his seat.

"A Swiss corps!" he shouted. "A Swiss corps, and nobody ever breathed a word of this to me!"

"It's very odd," said Miss Hatherton.

"And Miss Colonna was talking to me so much about Italy yesterday morning!"

"Perhaps they do not care to make a soldier of you, Mr. Trefalden," said the heiress.

"But they want soldiers!"

"True; but . . ."

"But what?"

"Perhaps they stand more in need of the sinews of war just now, than of your individual muscles."

"The sinews of war!" stammered Saxon.

"You might get killed, you see."

"Of course I might get killed; but every volunteer risks that. Vaughan may get killed."

"He may; but then Major Vaughan has not ever so many millions of money."

Saxon looked blankly in Miss Hatherton's face.

"I—I really don't understand," said he.

"Do you wish me to explain my meaning?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then—excuse the illustration—it might not be politic to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."

"Oh, Miss Hatherton!" exclaimed Saxon, "how can you be so unjust, and so uncharitable?"

Miss Hatherton smiled good temperedly.

"I am a plain speaker, Mr. Trefalden," said she, "and plain speakers must expect to be called uncharitable sometimes. You need not be angry with me because I speak the truth."

"But indeed you're mistaken. It's not the truth, nor anything like the truth."

"Nay," she replied, "I know the Colonnas better than you know them. Giulio Colonna is insatiable where Italy is concerned. I do not deny that he is personally disinterested. He would give the coat off his back to buy powder and shot for the cause; but he would strip the

coat from his neighbour's back for the same purpose without scruple."

"But, indeed"

"But, indeed, Mr. Trefalden, you may believe me when I tell you that he would regard it as a sacred duty to fling every farthing of your fortune into this coming war, if he could get the handling of it. You will do well to beware of him."

"Then I am sure that Miss Colonna is not"

"Miss Colonna is utterly dominated by her own enthusiasm and her father's influence. You must beware of her, too."

"You will tell me to beware of yourself next, Miss Hatherton!"

"No, my dear sir, I shall do nothing of the kind. I like you very much; but I neither want your money, nor Do you know what people are saying about you and Miss Colonna? By-the-way, is not this your station?"

"About me and Miss Colonna!" said Saxon, breathlessly.

“Yes—but this is certainly Sedgebrook. You must be quick, for they don’t stop one moment.”

“For Heaven’s sake, Miss Hatherton, tell me first !”

“No, no,—jump out, or you will be carried on. I’ll tell you when you are safe outside.”

Saxon jumped out, but clung to the window with both hands.

“Now !” said he. “Now !”

“Well,” replied Miss Hatherton, speaking somewhat slowly, and looking him full in the face ; “they say, Mr. Trefalden—they say you are going to squander your fortune on Italy ; marry Olimpia Colonna ; and break Lord Castle-towers’ heart.”

But Saxon never heard the last five words at all. Before Miss Hatherton could bring her sentence to an end, the shrill whistle drowned her voice, and the train began to move. The young man stood looking after it for some moments in blank bewilderment.

“Squander your fortune on Italy, and marry Olimpia Colonna !” he repeated to himself.

"Fly to Castletowers, sir?" said the solitary fly-driver of the place, recognising the Earl's visitor.

But Saxon preferred to walk; so he took the short cut through the fields, and strode on with Miss Hatherton's words still ringing in his ears.

"Marry Olimpia Colonna!" he said, for the twentieth time, as he sat down presently upon a stile, and proceeded unconsciously to cut off the heads of the nearest dandelions with his cane. "Marry Olimpia Colonna! Good God! there isn't a prince on this earth half good enough for her! As for me, I'm only just worthy to be one of her slaves. What a mad notion! What a mad, preposterous notion!"

Mad and preposterous as it was, however, he could think of nothing else; and every now and then, as he loitered on his way through the pleasant meadows, he repeated half aloud those wondrous words:

"Marry Olimpia Colonna!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

HIGH ART.

As Saxon's cab turned in at the gates of the South-Western Railway Station, Mr. William Trefalden, who chanced to be in the occupation of a very similar Hansom, was driving rapidly down the Waterloo Road. The two vehicles with their unsuspecting occupants had been almost side by side on Waterloo Bridge, and, by one of those curious coincidences which happen still oftener in real life than in fiction, the one cousin was going down into Surrey as the honoured guest of Lady Castletowers, while the other was rattling over to Camberwell in search of her ladyship's disinherited half-sister.

“Six, Brudenell Terrace.”

Mr. Trefalden took the card from his pocket-book, and read the address over once or twice.

It was the same card that Miss Rivière had given to Saxon, and which Saxon had entrusted to the lawyer's keeping a couple of hours before. Mr. Trefalden was a prompt man of business, and was showing himself to be, in the present instance, better than his word. He had promised to act for his young kinsman in this matter; but he had not promised to set about the task that same afternoon. Yet here he was, with his face already turned southwards, and Miss Rivière's address in his hand.

The fact was, that Mr. Trefalden took more interest in this piece of family history than he had chosen to express, and was bent on learning all that might be learnt about the Rivières without an hour's unnecessary delay. No man better appreciated the value of a family secret. There might, it is true, be nothing very precious in this particular specimen; but then one could never tell what might or might not be useful hereafter. At all events, Mr. Trefalden was not slow to see his way to possible advantages; and though he had asked time for consideration of what it might be best to do, he had half-a-dozen schemes out-

lined in his mind before Saxon left the office. Mr. Trefalden's plans seldom needed much elaboration. They sprang from his fertile brain like Minerva from the head of Zeus, armed at all points, and ready for the field.

Leaning back thoughtfully, then, with folded arms, and a cigar in his mouth, Mr. Trefalden drove past the Obelisk and the Elephant and Castle, and plunged into the very heart of that dreary suburban district which might with much propriety be called by the general name of Transpontia. Then, dismissing his cab at a convenient point, he proceeded in search of Brudenell Terrace on foot.

Transpontia is a district beset with difficulties to the inexperienced explorer. There dust, dissent, and dullness reign supreme. The air is pervaded by a faint odour of universal brickfield. The early muffin-bell is audible at incredible hours of the day. Files of shabby-genteel tenements, and dismal slips of parched front-garden, follow and *do* resemble each other with a bewildering monotony that extends for long miles in every direction, and is only interrupted here and there by a

gorgeous gin-palace, or a depressing patch of open ground, facetiously called a "green," or a "common." Of enormous extent, and dreary sameness, the topography of Transpontia is necessarily of the most perplexing character.

Mr. Trefalden was, however, too good a Londoner to be greatly baffled by the intricacies of any metropolitan neighbourhood. He pursued his way with a Londoner's instinct, and, after traversing a few small squares and by-streets, found himself presently in face of Brudenell Terrace.

It was a very melancholy terrace, built according to the strictest lodging-house order of architecture, elevated some four feet above the level of the street, and approached by a dilapidated flight of stone steps at each extremity. It consisted of four-and-twenty dingy, eight-roomed houses, in one or other of which, take them at what season of the year one might, there was certain to be either a sale or a removal going forward. In conjunction with the inevitable van or piece of stair-carpeting, might also be found the equally inevitable street-organ—that "most miraculous

organ," which can no more be silenced than the voice of murder itself; and which in Transpontia hath its chosen home. The oldest inhabitant of Brudenell Terrace confessed to never having known the hour of any day (except Sunday) when some interesting native of Parma or Lucca was not to be heard grinding his slow length along from number one to number twenty-four. On the present occasion, however, when Mr. Trefalden knocked at the door of the house for which he was bound, both van and Italian boy were at the farther end of the row.

A slatternly servant of hostile bearing opened six inches of the door, and asked Mr. Trefalden what he wanted. That gentleman intimated that he wished to see Mrs. Rivière.

"Is it business?" said the girl, planting her foot sturdily against the inner side of the door.

Mr. Trefalden admitted that it was business.

"Then it's Miss Rivers you want," said she, sharply. "Why didn't you say so at first?"

Mr. Trefalden attempted to explain that he should prefer to see Mrs. Rivière, if she would

receive him; but the belligerent damsel refused to entertain the proposition for a moment.

"It's nothing to me what you prefer," said she, with prompt indignation. "You can't see Mrs. Rivers. If Miss Rivers won't do, you may as well go away at once."

So the lawyer was fain to enter the citadel on such terms as he could get.

He was shown into a front parlour, very poorly furnished. The window was partially darkened by a black blind, and close beneath it stood a table strewn with small photographs and drawing materials. A bonnet and shawl lay on the sofa behind the door. Three or four slight sketches in water-colours were pinned against the walls. An old-fashioned watch in a bronze stand of delicate foreign workmanship, occupied the centre of the mantelshelf; and in the farther corner of the room, between the fireplace and window, were piled a number of old canvases with their faces to the wall. Mr. Trefalden divined the history of these little accessories at a glance. He knew, as well as if their owners had told him so, that the watch and the canvases were relics of

poor Edgar Rivière, and that the little water-colour sketches were by the artist's daughter. These latter were very slight — mere outlines, with a dash of colour here and there—but singularly free and decisive. One represented a fragment of Cyclopean wall, tapestried with creeping plants; another, a lonely mediæval tower, with ragged storm-clouds drifting overhead; another, a group of stone pines at sunset, standing up, bronzed and bristling, against a blood-red sky. All were instinct with that open-air look which defies imitation; and in the background of almost every subject were seen the purple Tuscan hills. William Trefalden was no indifferent judge of art, and he saw at once that these scrawls had genius in them.

While he was yet examining them, the door opened noiselessly behind him, and a rustling of soft garments near at hand warned him that he was no longer alone. He turned. A young girl, meanly dressed in some black material, with only a slip of white collar round her throat, stood about half way between the window and the door—a girl so fair, so slight, so transparent of com-

plexion, so inexpressibly fragile-looking, that the lawyer, for the first moment, could only look at her as if she were some delicate marvel of art, neither to be touched nor spoken to.

"You asked to see me, sir?" she said, with a transient flush of colour; for Mr. Trefalden still looked at her in silence.

"I asked to see Mrs. Rivière," he replied.

The young lady pointed to a chair.

"My mother is an invalid," she said, "and can only be addressed through me. Will you take a seat?"

But Mr. Trefalden, instead of taking a seat, went over to the corner, where the dusty canvases were piled against the wall, and said:—

"Are these some of your father's pictures?"

Her whole face became radiant at the mention of that name.

"Yes," she replied, eagerly. "Do you know his works?"

Mr. Trefalden paused a moment before answering this question. Then looking at her with a grave, almost a tender courtesy, he said:—

“I knew his works, my dear young lady—and I knew him.”

“You knew him? Oh, you knew a good man, sir, if you knew my dear, dear father!”

“A good man,” said Mr. Trefalden, “and a fine painter.”

Her eyes filled with sudden tears.

“If the world had but done him justice!” she murmured.

Mr. Trefalden thought he had never seen eyes so beautiful or so pathetic.

“The world never does justice to its finer spirits,” said he, “till they have passed beyond reach of its envy or hearing of its praise. But his day of justice will come.”

“Do you think so?” she said, drawing a little nearer, and looking up at him with the half-timid, half-trusting candour of a child. “Alas! I have almost given up hoping.”

“Never give up hoping, There is nothing in this world so unstable as its injustice—nothing so inevitable as its law of reward and retribution. Unhappily its laurels are too often showered upon tombs.”

"Did you know him in Italy?"

"No—in England."

"Perhaps you were one of his fellow-students?"

Mr. Trefalden shook his head.

"No; I am a true lover of the arts," he replied, "but no artist. I had a sincere admiration for your father's genius, Miss Rivière, and it is that admiration which brings me here to-day. I am anxious to know what pictures of his may still be in the possession of his family, and I should be glad to purchase some, if I might be allowed to do so."

A look of intense gladness, followed by one of still more intense pain, flashed over the girl's pale face at these words.

"I trust I have said nothing to annoy you," said Mr. Trefalden, as deferentially as if this fragile young creature were a stately princess, clad in cloth of gold and silver.

"Oh no, thank you," she replied, tremulously. "We shall be very glad to—to sell them."

"Then I have your permission to look at these?"

“I will show them to you.”

But Mr. Trefalden would not suffer Miss Rivière to show him the pictures. They were too heavy, and too dusty; and he was so glad to have the opportunity of seeing them that he considered nothing a trouble. Then he begged to be allowed to remove the black blind from the window; and when that was done, he dragged out the first picture, dusted it carefully with his own white handkerchief, and placed it in the best light the room afforded.

“That was one of his last,” said the daughter, with a sigh.

It represented Apollo and Daphne—Apollo in an attitude expressive of despair, looking very like a fine gentleman in an amateur play, elegantly got up in the Greek style and rather proud of his legs; with Daphne peeping at him coquettishly from the leaves of a laurel bush. It was not a vulgar picture, nor even a glaringly bad picture; but it had all the worst faults of the French school with none of its vigour, and was academic and superficial to the last degree.

Mr. Trefalden, who saw all this distinctly,

retreated, nevertheless, to the farther side of the room, shaded his eyes with his hands, and declared that it was an exquisite thing, full of poetry and classical feeling.

Then came a Cupid and Psyche on the point of leading off a *pas-de-deux*; a Danae in a cataract of yellow ochre; an Endymion sleeping, evidently on a stage bank, by the light of a “practicable” moon; a Holy Family; a Cephalus and Procris; a Caractacus before Claudius; a Diana and Callisto, and about a score of others—enough to fill a gallery of moderate size; all after the same pattern; all repeating the same dreary round of hackneyed subjects; all equally correct and mediocre.

Mr. Trefalden looked patiently through the whole collection, opening out those canvases which were rolled up, and going through the business of his part with a naturalness that was beyond all praise. He dwelt on imaginary beauties, hesitated over trifling blemishes, reverted every now and then to his favourites, and, in short, played the enlightened connoisseur to such perfection that the poor child by his side was

almost ready to fall down and worship him before the exhibition was over.

"How happy it would have made him to hear you, sir," she said, more than once. "No one ever appreciated his genius as you do!"

To which Mr. Trefalden only replied, with sympathetic courtesy, that he was "sorry to hear it."

Finally, he selected four of the least objectionable of the lot, and begged to know on what terms he might be allowed to possess them.

This question was referred by Miss Rivière to her mother, and Mr. Trefalden was finally entreated to name his own price.

"Nay but you place me in a very difficult position," said he. "What if I offer too small a sum?"

"We do not fear that," replied the young girl, with a timid smile.

"You are very good; but . . . the fact is that I may wish to purchase several more of these paintings—perhaps the whole of them, if Mrs. Rivière should be willing to part from them."

"The whole of them!" she echoed, breathlessly.

"I cannot tell at present; but it is not improbable."

Miss Rivière looked at Mr. Trefalden with awe and wonder. She began to think he must be some great collector—perhaps Rothschild himself!

"In the meanwhile," said he, "these being only my first acquisitions, I must keep my expenditure within a moderate limit. I should not like to offer more than two hundred pounds for these four paintings."

Two hundred pounds! It was as if a tributary of Pactolus had suddenly flowed in upon that humble front parlour and flooded it with gold. Miss Rivière could hardly believe in the material existence of so fabulous a sum.

"I hope I do not seem to under-estimate their value," said the lawyer.

"Oh, no—indeed!"

"You will, perhaps, submit my proposition to Mrs. Rivière?"

"No, thank you—I—I—am quite sure—your great liberality . . ."

"I beg you will call it by no such name," said Mr. Trefalden, with that little deprecatory gesture that showed his fine hand to so much advantage. "Say, if you please, my sense of justice, or, better still, my appreciation of excellence."

Here he took a little roll of bank-notes from his purse, and laid them on the table.

"I trust I may be permitted to pay my respects to Mrs. Rivière when I next call," he said. "She will not, perhaps, refuse the favour of an interview to one who knew her husband in his youth."

"I am sure mamma will be most happy," faltered Miss Rivière. "She is very delicate; but I know she will make the effort, if possible. We—we are going back soon to Italy."

And her eyes, as she said this, wandered involuntarily towards the packet of notes.

"Not *very* soon, I hope? Not immediately?"

"Certainly not immediately," she replied, with a sigh. "Mamma must be much better before she can travel."

Then Mr. Trefalden made a few politely sympathetic inquiries; recommended a famous

West-end physician; suggested a temporary sojourn at Sydenham or Norwood; and ended by requesting that the hostile maid-servant might fetch a cab for the conveyance of his treasures. He then took his leave, with the intimation that he would come again in the course of a few days, and go over the pictures a second time.

The door had no sooner closed behind him, than Miss Rivière flew up to her mother's bedroom, with the bank-notes in her hand.

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" she cried, flinging herself on her knees beside the invalid's easy-chair, and bursting into sobs of joy, "he has taken four of papa's paintings, and given—oh! what do you suppose?—given two hundred pounds for them! Two hundred pounds, all in beautiful, real bank-notes—and here they are! Touch them—look at them! Two hundred pounds—enough to take you to Italy, my darling, six times over!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

BRADSHAW'S GUIDE FOR MARCH.

WILLIAM TREFALDEN sat alone in his private room in a somewhat moody attitude, with his elbows on his desk, and his face buried in his hands. A folded deed lay unread before him. To his right stood a compact pile of letters with their seals yet unbroken. Absorbed in profound thought, he had not yet begun the business of the day, although more than an hour had elapsed since his arrival in Chancery Lane.

His meditations were interrupted by a tap at the door; and the tap was instantaneously followed by Mr. Keckwitch. The lawyer started angrily from his reverie.

"Why the deuce do you come in like that?" he exclaimed. "What do you want?"

"Beg your pardon, sir," replied the head-clerk,

with a rapid glance at the pile of unopened letters and the unread deed. "Messenger's waitin' for Willis and Barlow's bond; and you said I was to read it over to you before it went out."

Mr. Trefalden sighed impatiently, leaned back in his chair, and bade his clerk "go on;" whereat the respectable man drew the back of his hand across his mouth, and began.

"Know all men by these presents that we, Thomas Willis of number fourteen Charlcote Square in the parish of Hoxton in the county of Middlesex, and John Barlow of Oakley Villa in the parish of Brompton in the county of Middlesex Esquire, are jointly and severally holden and firmly bounden unto Ebenezer Foster and Robert Crompton of Cornhill in the parish of St. Peters upon Cornhill in the county of Middlesex Bankers and copartners in the sum of five thousand pounds of lawful British money to be paid to the said Ebenezer Foster and Robert Crompton their executors administrators and assigns or their lawful attorney and attorneys for which payment to be well and faithfully made we

bind ourselves jointly and severally and our and any two or one of our heirs executors and administrators firmly by these presents sealed with our respective seals. Dated . . . which I have left blank, sir, not knowing when the signatures will be made."

"Quite right," said Mr. Trefalden, dreamily. "Go on."

The head-clerk then proceeded in the same thick, monotonous tone, wading on from stage to stage, from condition to condition, till he came at length to—"Then and in such case the above written bond or obligation shall become void and of no effect, or else shall remain in full force, power, and virtue;" having read which he came to a dead pause.

And then again, for the third time, Mr. Trefalden said :—

"Go on."

Mr. Keckwitch smiled maliciously.

"That's the end of the deed, sir," he replied.

"The end of the deed?"

"Yes, sir. It struck me that you didn't hear much of it. Shall I go through it again?"

Mr. Trefalden bit his lip.

“Certainly not,” he said, sharply. “That voice of yours sends me to sleep. Leave the bond with me, and I will glance over it myself.”

So saying, he snatched the paper from the hand of his clerk, pointed to the door, and compelled himself to go through the document from beginning to end.

This done, and the messenger despatched, he dropped again into his accustomed seat, and proceeded mechanically to examine his diurnal correspondence. But only mechanically; for though he began with the top letter, holding it open with his left hand, and shading his eyes with his right, there was that in his thoughts which blotted out the sense of the words as completely as if the page were blank before him.

By-and-by, after staring at it vacantly for some ten minutes or more, William Trefalden crushed the letter in his hand, flung it on the table, and exclaiming half aloud, “Fool that I am!” pushed his chair hastily back, and began walking up and down the room.

Sometimes fast, sometimes slowly, sometimes stopping short in his beat for a minute at a time, the lawyer continued for the best part of an hour to pace to and fro between the window and the door, thinking earnestly.

Of what? Of a woman.

He could scarcely bring himself to confess it to his own thoughts; and yet so it was—a fact not to be evaded, impossible to be ignored. William Trefalden was in love for the first time in his life; utterly, passionately in love.

Yes, for the first time. He was thirty-eight years of age, and he had never in his life known what it was to feel as he felt now. He had never known what it was to live under the despotism of a single idea. He was not a good man. He was an unscrupulous and radically selfish man. A man of cultivated taste, cold heart, and iron will. A man who set his own gratification before him as the end for which he lived, and who was content to labour for that end as untiringly and stedfastly as other men labour for honour or freedom, or their soul's salvation. A man who knew no law save the law of his own will, and

no restraint save the restraint of his own judgment.

Up to this time he had regarded love as a taste, and looked upon women much in the same light as he looked upon fine wines, fine pictures, costly books, or valuable horses. They were one of the enjoyments of life — rather more troublesome, though perhaps not much more expensive than some other enjoyments; needing to be well-dressed, as books to be well-bound, or pictures well-framed; needing also, like valuable horses, to be kindly treated; but, like horses, to be held or changed at the pleasure of their owners.

Such was the theory, and such (for the secret may as well be told here as elsewhere) was the practice of William Trefalden's life. He was no gamester. He was no miser. He was no usurer. He was simply that dangerous phenomenon—a man of cold heart and warm imagination; a refined voluptuary.

And this was the secret which for long years he had guarded with such jealous care. He loved splendour, luxury, pleasure. He loved elegant surroundings, a well-appointed table,

well-trained servants, music, pictures, books, fine wines, fine eyes, and fine tobacco. For these things he had toiled harder than the poorest clerk in his employ. For these things he had risked danger and disgrace; and yet now, when he held the game on which he had staked his whole life already in his hand—now, in the very moment of success—this man found that the world contained one prize to obtain which he would willingly have given all the rest—nay, without which all the rest would be no longer worth possession.

Only a girl! Only a pale, pretty, dark-haired girl, with large, timid eyes, and a soft voice, and a colour that came and went fitfully when she spoke. A girl with ancient blood in her veins, and a certain child-like purity of bearing that told, at the first glance, how she must be neither lightly sought nor lightly won. A girl who, though she might be poor to beggary, could no more be bought like a toy than could an angel be bought from heaven.

It was surely madness for William Trefalden to love such a girl as Helen Rivière! He knew

that it was madness. He had a dim feeling that it might be ruin. He struggled against it—he fought with it—he flung himself into work—but all in vain. He was no longer master of his thoughts. If he read, the page seemed to have no meaning for him; if he tried to think, his mind wandered; if he slept, that girlish face troubled his dreams, and tormented him with despair and longing. For the first time in his life, he found himself the slave of a power which it was vain to resist. Well might he pace to and fro in utter restlessness of mind and body! Well might he curse his fate and his folly, and chafe against the chain that he was impotent to break! He had known strong impulses, angry passions, eager desires, often enough in the course of his undisciplined life; but never, till now, that passion or desire which was stronger than his own imperial will.

In the meanwhile the soul of Abel Keckwitch was disquieted within him. His quick ear caught the restless echo in the inner room, and he felt more than ever convinced that there was “something wrong somewhere.” Mr. Trefalden had

not opened his letters. Mr. Trefalden had not read the deed which awaited him upon his desk. Mr. Trefalden had not attended to a word of the important bond which he, Abel Keckwitch, notwithstanding his asthma, had laboriously read aloud to him from beginning to end. Nor was this all. Mr. Trefalden looked pale and anxious, like a man who had not slept the night before, and was obviously troubled in his mind. These were significant facts—facts very perplexing and tormenting; and Mr. Keckwitch sorely taxed his ingenuity to interpret them aright.

In the midst of his conjectures, Mr. Trefalden, who had an appointment in the Temple for half-past twelve, came out of his private room, and, glancing round the office, said:—

“Where are those paintings that I brought home the other day?”

Mr. Keckwitch tucked his pen behind his ear, and coughed before replying.

“In the cupboard behind the door, sir,” said he. “I put ’em there—to be out of sight.”

Mr. Trefalden opened the cupboard door, saw

that the pictures were safe within, and, after a moment's hesitation, said :—

“I took them for a bad debt, but they are of no use to me. You can have them, Keckwitch, if you like.”

“I, sir !” exclaimed the head-clerk, in accents of virtuous horror. “No, thank you, sir. None of your heathen Venuses for me. I should be ashamed to see 'em on the walls.”

“As you please. At all events, anyone who likes to take them is welcome to do so.”

Saying which, Mr. Trefalden, with a slightly scornful gravity, left his clerks to settle the question of ownership among themselves, and went on his way. The pictures were, of course, had out immediately, and became the objects of a good deal of tittering, tossing up, and wit of the smallest kind. In the meanwhile, the head-clerk found a pretext for going to his master's room, and instituted a rapid search for any stray scrap of information that might turn up.

It was a forlorn hope. Mr. Keckwitch had done the same thing a hundred times before, and

had never found anything; save, now and then, a few charred ashes in the empty grate. But it was in his nature to persevere doggedly. On the present occasion he examined the papers on the table, lifted the lid of William Trefalden's desk, peered between the leaves of the blotting-book, and examined the table-drawers in which the lawyer kept his stationery. In the latter he found but one unaccustomed article—an old Continental Bradshaw for the month of March.

"It wasn't there this morning," mused this amateur detective, taking up the Guide and turning it over inquisitively. "It's the same he had when he went to that place in Switzerland—page turned down and all."

And then Mr. Keckwitch uttered a suppressed exclamation, for the turned-down page was in the midst of the Italian itinerary.

"Lucca — Magadino — Mantua — Mentone — Milan."

What, in Heaven's name, could William Trefalden have to do with Lucca, Magadino, Mantua, Mentone, or Milan? How was it possible that any one of these places should be

mixed up with the cause of his present restlessness and pre-occupation?

The clerk was fairly puzzled. Finding, however, no further clue in any part of the volume, he returned to his desk and applied himself to a diligent search of the financial columns of the "Times."

He would have been still more puzzled if at that moment he could have seen William Trefalden, with the same weary, half-impatient look upon his face, leaning over the parapet of the Temple Gardens, and staring down idly at the river. It was just one o'clock—the quietest hour of the day in nursemaid-haunted squares—and the lawyer had the place to himself. All was still and dreamy in the old gardens. Not a leaf stirred on the trees. Not a sound disturbed the cloistered silence. The very sky was grey and uniform, unbroken by a sunbeam or a cloud. Presently a barge drifted by with the current; while far away, from crowded bridge and busy street, there rose a deep and distant hum, unlike all other sounds with which the ear of man is familiar.

It was a dreamy day and a dreamy place, and, busy man as he was, Mr. Trefalden was, to all appearance, as dreamy as either. But it is possible to be dreamy on the surface, and wakeful enough beneath it; and Mr. Trefalden's dreaminess was of that outward sort alone. All moody quiet without, he was all doubt, fever, and perturbation within. Project after project, resolution after resolution, kept rising like bubbles to the troubled surface of his thoughts—rising, breaking, vanishing, and giving place to others. Thus an hour went by, and Mr. Trefalden, hearing the church clocks strike two, roused himself with the air of a man whose course is resolved upon, and went out through Temple Bar, into the Strand. His course was resolved upon. He had made up his mind never to see Helen Rivière again; and yet

And yet, before he had reached the gates of Somerset House he had hailed a cab, and desired the driver to take him to Brudenell Terrace, Camberwell!

In the meanwhile Mr. Keckwitch, who had been anxiously studying the closing prices of all

sorts of Italian Railway, Banking, Telegraphic and Land Companies' Stock, believed that he had found the key to his employer's trouble when he read that the Great Milanese Loan and Finance Company's Six per Cent. Bonds were down to sixteen and a-half in the official list.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HELEN RIVIÈRE.

BORN and bred on the top floor of a gloomy old house in a still gloomier by-street of Florence, Helen Rivière had spent her childhood in a solitude almost as far removed from the busy press and shock of ordinary life as if she had been reared in a highland bothy, half-way betwixt the earth and sky. All the circumstances of her home and her home-life were exceptional. She had known none of the companionship and few of the joys of childhood. No rambles in green fields and purple vineyards, no pleasant rivalry of school-class and playground, no early friendships, with their innocent joys and sorrows, had ever been hers. Her mother was her one playmate, instructor, and friend. The flat house-top with its open loggia, its tubs of orange-trees and

myrtles, and its boxes of nasturtiums and mignonne, was her only playground. From thence she saw the burning sunsets and the violet hills ; from thence looked down on dome and campanile, crowded street and mediæval palace. This bird's-eye view of the rare old city, with such echoes of its life as found their way to her upper world, was almost all that Helen knew of Florence. Now and then, at very distant intervals, she had been led down into that busy lower world, to wander for a few hours through streets and piazzas stately with fountains and statues, or galleries so radiant with Madonnas and angels that they seemed like the vestibules of Heaven ; but this was very seldom.

Yet the child had, as it were, breathed all her life in an atmosphere of art. She could not remember the time when its phraseology and appliances were other than familiar to her. Her father's dimly lighted studio, redolent of oil and varnish and littered with canvases and casts ; her father himself in his smeared blouse and velvet cap, painting his unsaleable nymphs and dryads year after year with unabated enthu-

siasm; the lay figure in its folds of dusty drapery; the shabby *studenti* with their long hair and professional jargon, who used to drop in at twilight to smoke their cheap cigars upon the terraced roof, and declaim about art and liberty; the habit of observation insensibly acquired, and her own natural delight in form and colour, all combined to mould her inclinations and train her taste from earliest infancy. As a little child, she used to scrawl in pencil till her father taught her the rudiments of drawing. By-and-by, as she grew older and more skilful, she learned to colour prints and photographs for sale, and, some few months before her father died, had begun to study the art of enamel-painting.

Isolated thus in the heart of an ancient city; looking down upon the alien throng in street and market-place; watching the golden sunlight fade and change on Giotto's bell-tower and Brunelleschi's rust-brown dome; listening to the clang of bells at morn and even-song, and catching now and then faint echoes of chanted hymn or military march; growing daily more and more

familiar with the glories of Italian skies ; reading few books, seeing few faces, and ignorant of life and the world as a cloistered nun, this young girl spent the first years of her solitary youth. And they were very happy years, although—nay, perhaps *because*—they were so solitary. Having few ties, few tastes, few occupations, her character became more intense, her aims more concentrated than those of most very young women. She loved her mother with a passionate devotion that knew no limit to obedience and tenderness. She revered and admired her father with so blind a faith in his genius, that, despite her better knowledge, she believed even in the nymphs and dryads with all her tender heart. If her reading had been circumscribed it had at least been thorough. Shakspere and Milton, Dante and the Bible, made the best part of her library ; but she had read and re-read these books, thought about them for herself, treasured up long passages from them in her memory, and gathered from their pages more poetry, wisdom, and knowledge than ever came off the shelves

of a modern circulating library. Nor were these the only advantages of her secluded life. Never having known wealth, she was poor without being conscious of poverty—just as she was pure, because she had seen no evil—just as she was happy, because she coveted no blessings which were not already hers.

But at length there came a time when this simple home was to be made desolate. The unsuccessful painter fell ill and died, leaving his wife to the cold charity of Lady Castletowers. In an evil hour she travelled home to England, thinking so to conciliate her haughty sister and serve her child. But Lady Castletowers declined to see her; and the bitter English winter smote upon her delicate lungs and brought her to the verge of the grave; and for this it was that Helen Rivière went down to Castletowers, and prayed her haughty aunt for such trifling succour as should take them back in time to the sweet south.

Just at this crisis, like a prince in a fairy tale, Mr. Trefalden made his appearance in their dreary London lodging, bringing with him hope

and liberty, and his cousin Saxon's gold. If his story were not true, if he had never known Edgar Rivière in his life, if he despised the pictures he affected to praise, how were they to detect it? Enlightened connoisseur, munificent patron, disinterested friend that he was, how should the widow and orphan suspect that he purchased his claim to those titles with another man's money?

CHAPTER XXIX.

SAXON CONQUESTOR.

SAXON TREFALDEN, writing letters as he sat by the open window in his pleasant bed-room at Castletowers, laid his pen aside, and looked out wistfully at the sky and the trees. The view over the park from this point was not extensive ; but it was green and sunny ; and as the soft air came and went, bringing with it a faint perfume of distant hay, the young man thought of his pastoral home in the old Etruscan Canton far away.

He knew, as well as if he were gazing upon them from that tiny shelf of orchard ground at Rotzberg, how the grey, battlemented ridge of the Ringel was standing out against the deep blue sky ; how tenderly the shadows lay in the unmelted snowdrifts in the hollows of the Ga-

landa; and how the white slopes of the far-off Julier Alp were glittering in the sun. He knew, as well as if he were listening to them, how the goat-bells were making pleasant music to the brawling of the Hinter Rhine below; and how the pines were falling every now and then with a sullen crash, beneath the measured blows of the woodman's axe. And then he sighed, and went back to his task.

A pile of hastily scribbled notes to London acquaintances and tradesmen lay on one side, ready for the post-bag; and he was now writing a long letter to his Uncle Martin—a long, long letter, full of news, and bright projects, and written in Saxon's clearest and closest hand. Long as it was, however, it was not finished, and would not be finished till the morrow. He had something yet to add to it; and that something although it could not be added now, was perplexing him not a little as he sat, pen in hand, looking out absently at the shadows that swept over the landscape.

He had made up his mind to propose to Olimpia Colonna.

He had told himself over and over again that the man who aspired to her hand should be a prince, a hero, a soldier, an ardent patriot, at the least; and yet, modest as he was of his own merit, he could no longer doubt that his proposal would be accepted whenever he should have the courage to make it. Lady Castletowers, who had shown a great deal of condescending interest in him of late, had dropped more than one flattering hint with the view of urging him forward in his suit. Colonna's bearing towards him, ever since the day when he had given in his subscription, had been almost significantly cordial; and Olimpia's smiles were lavish of encouragement. Already he had been more than once on the brink of an avowal: and now, as the last week of his visit was drawing to a close, and his letter to Switzerland awaited despatch, he had fairly reviewed his position and come to the conclusion that he would make Miss Colonna a formal offer of his hand in the course of that same day.

"If she really doesn't love me," said he, half-aloud, as he sat biting the end of his pen and

staring down at the unfinished page, "she'll say so, and there will be an end of it. If she *does* love me—and, somehow, I cannot believe it!—why, although she is a million times too good, and too beautiful, and too high-born for an uncivilised mountaineer such as I, I will do my best, with God's help, to be worthy of her choice."

And then he thought of all the intoxicating looks and smiles with which Olimpia had received his awkward homage; and the more he considered these things the more clearly he saw, and marvelled at, the distinction that had befallen him.

And yet he was by no means beside himself with happiness—perhaps, because, if the truth must be confessed, he was not very deeply in love. He admired Olimpia Colonna intensely. He thought her the most beautiful and high-minded woman under heaven; but, after all, he did not feel for her that profound, and tender, and passionate sympathy which had been the dream of his boyhood. Even now, when most completely under the spell of her influence, he

was vaguely conscious of this want. Even now, in the very moment of anticipated triumph, when his heart beat high at the thought of winning her, he found himself wondering whether he should be able to make her happy—whether she would love his Uncle Martin—whether she would always be quite as much absorbed in Italian politics and Italian liberty?

When he had arrived at this point, he was interrupted by a tap at the door and a voice outside asking if there was “any admission?”

“Always, for you,” replied Saxon; whereupon the Earl opened the door and came in.

“There!” said he, “you’re writing letters, and don’t want me.”

“On the contrary, I have written all that are to be posted to-day, and am glad to be interrupted. There’s the rocking chair at your service.”

“Thanks. May I take a cigar?”

“Twenty, if you will. And now, what news since breakfast?”

“A good deal, I suspect,” replied the Earl, moodily. “Montecuculi’s here.”

“Who is Montecuculi?”

“One of our Central Committee men—an excellent fellow; descended from the Montecuculis of Ferrara. One of his ancestors poisoned a Dauphin of France, and was torn to pieces for it by four horses, ever so many centuries ago.”

“He did no such thing,” said Saxon. “The Dauphin died of inflammation brought on by his own imprudence; and Montecuculi was barbarously murdered. It was always so in those hateful middle ages. When a prince died, his physicians invariably proclaimed that he was poisoned; and then some wretched victim was sure to be broken on the wheel, or torn to pieces.”

“The physicians did it to excuse their want of skill, I suppose,” remarked the Earl.

“Or else because princes were too august to catch colds and fevers, like other men.”

“There spoke the republican.”

“But where is this Montecuculi?”

“Shut up with Colonna in his den. He brings important news from the seat of war; but at present I only know that Garibaldi has achieved

some brilliant success, and that our guests are leaving us in all haste."

"What, the Colonnas?"

"Yes, the Colonnas."

"But not to-day?"

"This evening, immediately after dinner."

Saxon's countenance fell.

"That is quick work," said he. "Where are they going?"

"To London."

"Is anything the matter?"

"Nothing—except that a Genoese deputy is hourly expected, and our friends are summoned to meet him."

"Then they will come back to you again?"

"Not a chance of it. The present is an important crisis, and we have a whole round of special committees and public meetings coming on in London and elsewhere. No—we shall not see them down again at Castletowers this year. They will have more than enough of active work on hand for the next week or two; and then, no doubt, they will be off to Italy."

Saxon was silent. Having once resolved on

a course of action, it was not in him to be turned aside by small obstacles; and he was now thinking how, in the midst of all this hurry of departure, he should obtain his interview with Miss Colonna.

"This place will be as lively as a theatre by daylight when you are all gone," observed the Earl, presently.

"You must come up to town," replied Saxon. "I had a note from Burgoyne this morning, in which he says that London is fuller than ever."

Lord Castletowers shook his head.

"I shall run up occasionally for a few hours at a time," said he, "while these meetings are being held; but I shall not be able to make any stay."

"Why not?"

"Because I cannot afford it."

"Nonsense! What do you mean?"

"Simply what I say. I am a poor man, my dear fellow—which fact I believe you have heard me state before—and although I look upon a good London hotel as the first stage on the road to Paradise, and upon a fortnight in town during

the best of the season as pure beatitude, I can seldom afford to indulge my taste for either."

"But I should have thought, with a place like this"

"That's just what it is!" replied the Earl, knocking off the ash from his cigar, and rocking himself dismally to and fro. "It's a dear old place, and I wouldn't exchange it for Aladdin's palace of jewels; but it costs me every farthing of my income merely to live in it. I was left, you see, with an encumbered estate; and in order to clear it, I was obliged to sell three of the best little farms in the county. I even sold a slice of the old park, and that was the greatest sorrow of my life."

"I can well believe it," said Saxon.

"Consequently, I am now obliged to do the best I can with a large house and a small income."

"Still you have cleared off the encumbrances?"

The Earl nodded.

"All of them?"

"Yes, thank Heaven! all."

Saxon drew his chair a little nearer, and looked his friend earnestly in the face.

“Pray don’t think me impertinent,” said he; “but—but I’ve seen you looking anxious at times—and somehow I have fancied Would you mind telling me, Castletowers, if you have really any trouble on your mind? Any outstanding claim, for instance, that—that . . .”

“That a generous fellow like yourself could help me to meet? No, Trefalden—not one. I thank you heartily for your kind thought, but I owe no man a penny.”

Saxon drew a deep breath of satisfaction. He would scarcely have liked to confess, even to himself, with how keen a sense of relief he found his cousin’s statement corroborated.

“I rejoice to hear it,” he replied. “And now, Castletowers, you must promise that you will go up with me the day after to-morrow, and make my rooms your hotel. I have three there in St. James’s Street, and I can have a couple more if I like; and you don’t know how lonely I feel in them.”

“You are goodnature itself,” said the Earl; “but indeed”

“It’s not good nature—it’s pure selfishness. I like London. I am intensely interested in its multitudinous life and intellectual activity; but it is a terrible place to live in all alone. If, however, I had a couple of rooms which I might call your rooms, and which I knew you would occupy whenever you were in town, the place would seem more like home to me.”

“But, my dear Trefalden”

“One moment, please! I know, of course, that it is, in one sense, a monstrous presumption on my part to ask you to do this. You are an English peer, and I am a Swiss peasant; but then you have received me here as your guest, and treated me as if I were your equal”

“Trefalden, hear me,” interrupted the Earl, vehemently. “You know my political creed—you know that, setting friendship, virtue, education aside, I hold all men to be literally and absolutely equal under heaven?”

“Yes, as an abstract principle”

“Precisely so—as an abstract principle. But

abstract and concrete are two very different things; and permit me to tell you that I have the honour and happiness of knowing two men who, so far as I am competent to judge myself and them, are as immeasurably superior to me in all that constitutes true nobility, as if there were no such principle as equality under the sun. And those two men are Giulio Colonna and Saxon Trefalden."

Saxon laughed and coloured up.

"What reply can I make to such a magnificent compliment?" said he.

"Beg my pardon, I should think, for the speech that provoked it."

"But do you really mean it?"

"Every word of it."

"Then I will go up to town a day sooner, and prepare your rooms at once. If that's your opinion of me, you can't refuse to grant the first favour I have ever asked at your hands."

The Earl smiled and shook his head.

"We will talk of that by-and-by," he said. "If I have not consented, it is through no want of confidence in your friendship."

"I should look upon that consent as a strong proof of yours," said Saxon.

"I came to your room to-day, Trefalden, to give you a much stronger proof of it," replied the Earl, gravely.

The words were simple enough, but something in the tone in which they were uttered arrested Saxon's attention.

"You may be sure that I shall value it, whatever it may be," said he; and waited for Lord Castletowers to proceed.

But the Earl was, apparently, in no haste to do so. Swaying idly to and fro, and watching the light smoke of his cigar, he remained for some moments silent, as if hesitating how and where to begin. At length he said:—

"I do believe, Trefalden, that you are the best fellow breathing."

"That I certainly am not," replied Saxon; "so pray don't think it."

"But I do think it; and it is just because I think it that I am here now. I want to tell you something."

Saxon bent his head, and listened.

"Something which I have been keeping to myself for years, because—well, because I have never had a friend to whom I could confide it—I mean a really intimate friend whom I could trust, as I know I may trust you."

"Thank you," said Saxon, simply.

"I have felt the want of such a one, bitterly," continued the Earl. "It's hard to be for ever brooding over one idea, without being able to seek sympathy or counsel."

"I should think it must be," replied Saxon; "but I've never had a secret of my own."

"Then, Trefalden," said the Earl, throwing away the end of his cigar with a very gloomy look, "you have never been in love."

Saxon made no reply. He had fully anticipated some confidence on the subject of money, and his friend's rejoinder took him by surprise.

Had he been asked, he could not have told why it was so; but the surprise, somehow, was not a pleasant one.

"The truth is," said the Earl, "I am a very unlucky, and a very miserable fellow.

I love a woman whom I have no hope of marrying."

"How is that?"

"Because I am poor, and she has nothing—because I could not bear to act in opposition to my mother's wishes—because in short, because the woman I love is Olimpia Colonna."

Saxon's heart gave one throb—just one—as Castletowers spoke the name; and then his breath seemed to come short, and he was afraid to speak, lest his voice should be unsteady.

"Had you guessed my secret?" asked the Earl. Saxon shook his head.

"I feel sure my mother has guessed it, long since; but she has entire confidence in my honour, and has never breathed a syllable to me on the subject. All her hope is that I may repair our shattered fortunes by a wealthy marriage. Proud as she is—and my mother is a very proud woman, Trefalden—she would rather see me marry that rich Miss Hatherton whose father was a common miner, than Olimpia Colonna with her eight hundred years of glorious ancestry!"

“Eight hundred years!” repeated Saxon, mechanically.

“It is one of the noblest families in Europe,” continued the Earl. “The Colonnas were sovereign Dukes and Princes when the Pierreponts were Norman Counts, and the Wynnecliffes simple Esquires. They have given many Cardinals to Rome, and one Pope. They have repeatedly held the rank of Viceroys of Naples, Sicily, and Aragon; and they have numbered among them some of the greatest generals and noblest scholars of the middle ages. I tell you, Trefalden, it is incomprehensible to me how my mother, who attaches such profound importance to birth, should weigh gold against blood in such a question as this!”

He paused, beating the floor with his foot, and too much absorbed in his own story to pay much heed to his listener.

“But then, you see,” he continued presently, “money is not the only obstacle. The man who marries Olimpia Colonna must go heart and soul, hand and fortune, into the Italian cause. I would do it, willingly. I would melt my last ounce of

plate, cut down my last timber, mortgage the roof over my head, if I had only myself to consider. But how is it possible? I cannot reduce my mother to beggary."

"Of course not."

And then there was another pause. At length the Earl looked up suddenly, and said,

"Well now, Trefalden, what is your advice?"

"Advice!" stammered Saxon. "You ask *me* for advice?"

"Undoubtedly."

"But I—I, who know so little of life and the world—how can I advise you?"

"It is just for that reason—because you are so unbiassed by conventional prejudice and worldly wisdom—that I attach a peculiar value to your opinion. Tell me what you think I ought to do. Should I, for instance, talk it over with my mother, or speak to Colonna first? He is her oldest friend, and his opinion has great weight with her. There lies my chief hope. If he were with me, I do not think she would persist in any lengthened opposition. Besides, I would do anything to make up for Olimpia's want of fortune.

I know I could make myself a good position in the Upper House, if I chose to read up facts, and study home-questions. Or I would cultivate my influential friends, and try to get some foreign diplomatic appointment. In short, give me but the motive, and I will do anything ! ”

“ But these are matters of which I know nothing.”

“ I am not asking you how I shall push my way in the future, my dear Saxon,” replied the Earl, eagerly ; “ but how you think I ought to act in the present. What would you do yourself, if you were in my position ? ”

Saxon, sitting a little away from the light, with his elbow resting on the table and his head supported by his hand, looked down thoughtfully, and hesitated before replying. His friend had given him a hard problem to solve—a bitter task to perform.

“ Are you sure that you love her ? ” he said presently, speaking somewhat slowly.

“ As sure as that yonder sun is now shining in the heavens ! Why, Trefalden, she was the ideal of my boyhood ; and for the last four years,

since she has been staying with us so often, and for so many months at a time, I have loved her with the deepest love that man can give to woman."

"And do you think that—that she loves you?"

Do what he would, Saxon could not quite keep down the tremor in his voice as he asked this question; but the Earl was too intensely pre-occupied to observe it.

"A year ago—nay, three months ago," said he, "I was certain of it. Latterly, I cannot tell why, there has been a constraint—a coldness—as if she were trying to crush out the feeling from her own heart, and the hope from mine. And yet, somehow, I feel as if the change went no deeper than the surface."

"You believe, in short, that Miss Colonna loves you still?"

"By Heaven, Trefalden, I do!" replied the Earl, passionately.

"You have not asked her?"

"Certainly not. She was my guest."

Saxon covered his eyes for a moment with his hand, as if in profound thought. It was an

eventful moment—a cruel moment—the first moment of acute suffering that he had ever known. No one but himself ever knew how sharp a fight he fought while it lasted—a fight from which he came out wounded and bleeding, but a conqueror. When he lifted up his face, it was pale to the very lips, but steady and resolved.

“Then, Castletowers,” he said—and his voice had no faltering in it—“I will tell you what I would do if—if I were in your place. I would learn the truth from her own lips, first of all.”

“But my mother”

“Lady Castletowers will acquiesce when she knows that your happiness is involved. It is but a question of fortune, after all.”

The Earl sprang to his feet, and began pacing to and fro.

“It is welcome counsel,” said he. “If I only dared—if I were but sure and yet, is it not better to know the worst at once?”

“Far better,” replied Saxon, drearily.

Lord Castletowers went over to the window, and leaned out into the sunshine.

"Why should I not?" he mused, half aloud. "If I fail, I shall be no poorer than I am now—except in hope! Except in hope! But if I succeed Ah! if I succeed!"

His face grew radiant at the thought.

"Yes, Trefalden," he exclaimed, "you are right. Why set myself to overcome so many obstacles if, when all is done, I am to find that I have had my toil for nothing? I *will* ask her. I will ask her this very day—this very hour, if I can find her alone. It will be no breach of hospitality to do so now. Thanks—thanks a thousand times!"

Saxon shook his head.

"You have nothing to thank me for, Castle-towers," he replied.

"For your counsel," said the Earl.

"Which may bring you sorrow, remember."

"Then for your friendship!"

"Well, yes—for my friendship. You have that, if it is worth your thanks."

"Time will show what value I place upon it," replied the Earl. "And now, for the present, adieu. I know you wish me success."

With this, he grasped Saxon warmly by the hand, and hurried from the room. When the last echo of his foot had died away on stair and corridor, the young man went over to the door, locked it, and sat quietly down, alone with his trouble. And it was in truth no light or imaginary trouble. He saw, clearly enough, that he must accept one of two things—both equally bitter. Either Olimpia Colonna had never loved him, or he had supplanted his friend in her affections. Which was it? His heart told him.

END OF VOL. II.



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